The Bancroft Library

University of California • Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series

Andrew Imbrie

PORTRAIT OF A CONTEMPORARY COMPOSER

With an Introduction by
Robert P. Commanday

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline C. Crawford
in 1998 and 1999

Copyright © 2000 by The Regents of the University of California

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

****

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Andrew Imbrie dated June 23, 1998. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Bancroft Library, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley 94720-6000, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user. The legal agreement with Andrew Imbrie requires that he be notified of the request and allowed thirty days in which to respond.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Andrew Imbrie, "Portrait of a Contemporary Composer," an oral history conducted in 1998 and 1999 by Caroline C. Crawford, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2000.

Copy no. 1

Andrew Imbrie at work, circa 1990.

Cataloguing information

IMBRIE, Andrew (b. 1921) Composer

Portrait of a Contemporary Composer, 2000, ix, 241 pp.

Early years, studies with Ann Abajian, Leo Ornstein, Olga Samaroff, Rosalyn Tureck; Paris and Nadia Boulanger, 1937; Roger Sessions, 1939-1946; education at Princeton, and UC Berkeley; Composer's Forum, 1946-1966: programming and commisions, critics, the California Quartet; fellow at American Academy in Rome, 1947-1949; comments on Elliott Carter, Robert Commanday, SF Symphony conductors; teaching at UC Berkeley, 1941-1991: Albert Elkus, Manfred Bukofzer, Joaquin Nin-Culmell, David Boyden, Griller Quartet, committee work, teaching theory; marriage to Barbara Cushing; the process of composing, *Angle of Repose, Prometheus Bound;* 1990s, teaching, Chicago, NYU, and festivals, Tanglewood, Sandpoint; thoughts on the contemporary music scene, awards, frustrations; Appendices include list of compositions, and "A Grain of Salt," "Is Experimentalism Dead?" and other writings by Imbrie.

Introduction by Robert P. Commanday, Director, *San Francisco Classical Voice* and former music critic, *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Interviewed 1998 and 1999 by Caroline Crawford for the Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Regional Oral History Office, on behalf of future researchers, wishes to thank Mrs. Phyllis Wattis, whose generous contribution has made possible the Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series.

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Andrew Imbrie

PREFACE i

INTRODUCTION by Robert P. Commanday iv

INTERVIEW HISTORY by Caroline C. Crawford vii

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ix

I EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES; PARIS, BOULANGER AND STRAVINSKY: 1921-1939 1
Parents and Family 1
Music Studies with Ann Abajian, Leo Ornstein, Olga Samaroff, Rosalyn Tureck 3
Paris, 1937, and Nadia Boulanger 8
Meeting with Stravinsky 11

II STUDIES WITH ROGER SESSIONS: 1939-1946 14
First String Quartet, 1942 14
Sessions and Serialism 16
Military Service, 1942-1946 17

III STUDIES AT UC BERKELEY, 1946-1947, AND COMPOSER'S FORUM 19
Sessions and Milhaud Schools 19
Composer's Forum, 1946-1966 21
Programming and Commissions for Composer's Forum 24
Associations with Other Composers 26
Remembering Roger Sessions 28
Composer's Forum and the Critics 30
The California Quartet and Other Forum Performers 32
Elliott Carter and the International Society for Contemporary Music 33
A Close Friendship with Robert Commanday 34
San Francisco Symphony and New Music: Monteux, Jorda, Krips, and de Waart 36
The Recording Industry and New Music 39
More About First and Second String Quartets; "Stealing from Bartok" 40
Funding New Music and More About Commissions 42
Two Years as a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome, 1947-1949 46

IV TEACHING AT UC BERKELEY: 1949-1991 55
Loyalty Oath Issues, 1949-1951 55
Remembering Albert Elkus, Joaquin Nin-Culmell, Manfred Bukofzer 56
Faculty Appointments 59
Weighing Performance against Scholarly and Creative Work; Noon Concerts 61

Musicologists vs. Composers and the Ph.D. in Composition 64
David Boyden and Ethnomusicology 68
The Griller Quartet 69
Committee Work at UC: Taking a Stand against Secrecy at the UC Labs 70
Thoughts about Teaching Composition; A Student's Thoughts about Becoming a Composer 74
The Teaching of Theory 77
Outstanding Music Department Alumni 79
Retirement, Music Students, and Advice to Young Composers 81
Marriage to Barbara Cushing and Family 85

V THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING 87
Finding the Central Idea 87
Importance of Architecture and Linear Thinking 89
Metrical Hierarchies 92
Mozart and Process: A Secure Musical Language 93
The Sonata Form and Commitment to a Basic Plan 95
Hearing One's Own Work Performed; and Quotations in Music 97
Angle of Repose, 1976: A Bicentennial Opera 99
Wagner, Writing a First Opera and *Prometheus Bound* 106
On Critics and Abstraction and Music 108
On the Choosing of Texts 111

VI OTHER TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS; FESTIVALS; EVALUATIONS 116
Visiting Professorships at the University of Chicago, 1996-1997, and New York University, 1995, and Princeton Associations 116
Postwar Avant-Garde Music at Princeton and the American Society of Composers at the Universities 121
Northwestern's School of Music, 1994 123
Festival Associations: Sandpoint, Idaho, 1989-1993 and Tanglewood, 1991; Gunther Schuller 124
McKim Fund Commissions 127
Music Journals 127
Thoughts on Evaluating One's Works 128
The Quartets 130
Composers and Their Audiences 132
Songs of Then and Now 133
The Composing Routine 137

VII THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SCENE; COMMUNICATION AND PROCESS 141
Shostakovich and Others 141
Music and Communication; More about the Quartets and the First Symphony 144
The Influence of Jazz 148
Awards and Panels 149
A Composer's Frustrations; A Conservative Backlash and Postmodernism 153
The Music Scene Today 154

APPENDIX

A List of Compositions and Biographical Sketch 162

B "A Grain of Salt," by Andrew Imbrie, 1965 167

C "'Expressive Behavior' in Music," by Andrew Imbrie, from *Conference on a Longitudinal Study of Expressive Behavior in the Arts,* Jack Morrison, 1965 171

D "The Composer's Higher Learning," by Andrew Imbrie, 1970 174

E "Is Experimentalism Dead?", by Andrew Imbrie, 1978 179

F "Statement About My Music," by Andrew Imbrie, 1978 195

G "American Music In and Out of the Universities," contribution to the *Einaudi Enciclopedia della Musica*, 1978 196

H "Andy Imbrie on Writing Music," from *42 News*, An occasional newsletter for the Princeton Class of 1942, September 1999 207

I Program notes; pencil worksheets and printed score of "Full Fathom Five," *Songs of Then and Now*, 1999 208

J Press Reviews (various) 224

INDEX 239

PREFACE

The Composers of the Twentieth Century series of oral histories, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1998 to document the lives and careers of a number of twentieth-century composers with significant California connections, the composers chosen to represent a cross section of musical philosophies, cultural backgrounds and education.

The twentieth century in this country has produced an extraordinary disparity of musical styles and languages, resulting in controversy and even alienation between composers and audiences, as composers sought to find a path between contemporary and traditional musical languages: serialism, minimalism, neoclassicism, and back to some extent to neoromanticism in the last decades. The battle of styles was perhaps inevitable, as well as the reverse pendulum swing that has followed, but to quote a recent article in the *New York Times*, "the polemics on both sides were dismaying."

The composers were selected with the help of university of California faculty and musicians from the greater community and asked to discuss their musical philosophies, the development of their musical language, their processes of composing, ideas about the nineteenth-century European heritage, and experiences studying with such signal teachers as Nadia Boulanger, Roger Sessions, Arnold Schoenberg, Darius Milhaud, Luigi Dallapiccola and others, university associations (Andrew Imbrie) or orchestral ones (David Sheinfeld), and forays into fields as different as jazz (Dave Brubeck), electronic music (Pauline Oliveros), and film (Leonard Rosenman). Various library collections served as research resources for the project, among them those of the UC Berkeley and UCLA Music Libraries, The Bancroft Library, and the Yale School of Music Library.

Oral history techniques have rarely been applied in the field of music, the study of music having focused until now largely on structural and historical developments in the field. It is hoped that these oral histories, besides being vivid cultural portraits, will promote understanding of the composer's work, the musical climate in the times we live in, the range of choices the composer has and the obstacles he or she faces, the avenues for writing and exposure.

Funding for the Composers of the Twentieth Century series of oral histories came in the form of a large grant from San Francisco art patroness Phyllis Wattis, to whom the Regional Oral History Office is greatly indebted. Mrs. Wattis has supported several other of the office's projects, including the histories of Kurt Herbert Adler and the

San Francisco Opera and Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of The Bancroft Library.

Caroline C. Crawford
Project Director
Composers in the Twentieth Century Series

June 1999
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series

October 2000

Andrew Imbrie, *Portrait of a Contemporary Composer*, 2000

David Sheinfeld, *An Original Voice in Twentieth-Century Music*, 1999

Oral Histories in Process

Dave Brubeck
John Chowning
Pauline Oliveros

INTRODUCTION by Robert P. Commanday

This is as much a witness to Andrew Imbrie's oral history as its introduction, a considerable part of this story having been related to me conversationally over the course of our fifty-six years of friendship. I quickly add that this document answers my long-cherished wish to see written out and published the ideas, observations, recollections and insights of this special man. This oral history is both a history of the musical and academic worlds in which he has played an important part, and a mirror reflecting the way he viewed his experiences, a portrait of the man.

Andrew reveals the independence he had even in his youth, as he describes his early studies under Leo Ornstein, Olga Samaroff, Rosalyn Tureck and his responses to them. In no way, however, was this disrespect or rebelliousness, attitudes which are not part of his makeup. Rather it was his early awareness of self and purpose, an expression of the self-reliance essential to his individuality. In that respect, his remark about Ornstein is telling: "He made a valuable contribution to me as a composer in just being himself..." No single phrase could be more applicable to Andrew himself than those last three words.

Repeatedly, in recalling musicians, composers, and academic colleagues, he picks out with a few deft strokes an individual's essential quality. His professional appreciation of Roger Sessions, the mentor most important and closest to him, is not a personal one--which it might well have been except that he is here consciously not creating a memoir. Sessions is described as one of the few people (in the music world) above the dichotomy that defined much of the musical situation in the twentieth century, as one leading composer who found a synthesis between diatonicism and chromaticism.

At the twentieth century's midpoint, a crucial episode in the Bay Area's musical history occurred in the relationship between two circles of composers, the seminar at UC Berkeley around Roger Sessions and the students at Mills College around Darius Milhaud. The historic interaction between the two "schools," its effect on the composers, and the Composer's Forum that grew out of this, receives its due credit in this chapter of the oral history.

Naturally, Andrew gives a composer's view of the musical scene here, valuing aspects which have been too easily brushed from the historical memory. Examples are Enrique Jorda's support of local composers and his conducting the San Francisco Symphony in their works, and Josef Krips' musicianship and contribution, fairly and generously appreciated.

Similarly, memories of the university, its history, and of the Music Department are gracious, especially his recollections of individual colleagues. Some cogent points he makes about the university and the department are not generally known and certainly not, to my knowledge, published elsewhere. For example, discussing policies and viewpoint that distinguish the UC Berkeley's Music Department from others, he cites the department's preferred hiring of "young people who had great potential" rather than of "famous people to replace other famous people," and he brings up the role of performance in relation to degrees, an ongoing question that music departments everywhere must face and resolve in some fashion.

Most of all, Andrew's viewpoints on musical issues, one can even consider them part of a credo, are lucid and direct, striking the mark, characteristic of his firm integrity. Some observations cut through a lot of the fuzzy and misguided thinking that occurs in musical discussions and writings. For example, he meets head-on the notion that the circumstances under which a piece of music was written and what might have been going on in the composer's mind have some bearing on the listening process and attitude, saying, "Ultimately you have to judge (the piece) on its own merits."

Whether talking about 12-tone technique as just that, a technique useful, perhaps important to learn, or about the composer's necessary assumption that he and his listener must meet each other halfway, when he offers his metaphor of the composer's role as a kind of actor, when he uses an evocative image to describe the nature of melody or line or talks about breathing as the basis of phrasing--these distillations are not as simple as they might seem. These originated in his working and thinking as a composer and no doubt, were refined in his teaching. They also reflect or perhaps explain his gift as a teacher. And next to composing, teaching is what he loves best, the calling he continued to follow after retirement from the university.

In effect, summarizing his teaching attitude and commitment Andrew said, "A lot of people have the potential of being composers. All they need is encouragement, and they need someone to focus them on the problem and show them how exciting it can be and then they realize they are composers." A similarly optimistic view tempers his assessment of the greater difficulties young composers face today, his encouragement by the interesting things he sees going on, his feeling that an increase in sophistication today counters the fact that things were "easier" in his day.

It's unlikely, I think, that Andrew will ever write a book about composing or about his thoughts on music because he'd much prefer to serve his passion and compulsion to compose and would grudge diverting the energy. Similarly, but also because of the natural reserve of this private man, it seems improbable that he would share his more personal

experiences and reflections in a memoir. His inner life is however, out there, available to all who would listen thoughtfully and meet him halfway, as he hopes, in the music that is the real history of the man.

Robert P. Commanday
Editor, *San Francisco Classical Voice*

July 2000
San Francisco

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Andrew Imbrie

Roger Sessions once said of his student Andrew Imbrie that he was one of the leading composers of his generation. This oral history focuses on Mr. Imbrie's life as a composer and on his profoundly individualistic and superbly crafted music, which he began composing in the 1940s and continues to compose today. He is currently working on a piece entitled *From Time to Time*, about World War II in Japan, which was commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota; earlier this year the recording of his Requiem and Piano Concerto No. 3 won him a Grammy Award nomination.

Andrew Imbrie grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, where he studied with Roger Sessions before and during his undergraduate years at Princeton University, following several generations of Imbries before him. His career as a composer began with his First String Quartet, written in 1942 as a senior thesis. It won him the New York Music Critics' Circle Award that year and in 1954 it was recorded by the Juilliard String Quartet.

His studies with Roger Sessions led him to UC Berkeley in 1946, where Sessions was on the faculty, and where he received his masters degree. Offered a faculty position at that time, Mr. Imbrie postponed teaching to take a two-year fellowship at the American Academy of Rome, returning to Berkeley to teach composition and theory for more than forty years in the university's music department.

Andrew Imbrie says modestly of his music: "It is easier to say what it is not than to say what it is. It does not strive to be American like my nationality, nor Scottish like my ancestry. It is neither experimental nor conventional." Discussing his approach to composing in the oral history he says: "I always start at the beginning and let the ideas shape themselves as they must; the direction they will pursue and the changes in character they will undergo become increasingly clear as I go on." Unlike many composers of his generation, he holds that music is an essentially communicative art; the humanity of his work sets him apart in a time when much new music serves technology rather than poetry.

In the oral history, Mr. Imbrie describes at length his studies with Roger Sessions, the music department at Berkeley and its rivalries between composers and musicologists, his thoughts on teaching, major works, and the process of composing. He also discusses the evolution of his opera, *Angle of Repose*, which he considers among his most ambitious works to date.

Mr. Imbrie agreed to be interviewed in the spring of 1998; the four interview sessions took place over several months in his studio in the Berkeley hills, a handsome, well-lit room where he composes at a Steinway concert grand. He reviewed the transcripts and made minor changes in the text.

We are grateful to the Yale University Oral History Program for allowing us to incorporate two excerpts from their 1983 interview with Mr. Imbrie, to Amelia Archer for her transcriptions of the interviews, to University Archivist Emeritus James Kantor for his proofreading of the text, and to Robert P. Commanday for his introduction to the volume.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, Division Head, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Caroline C. Crawford
Music Editor

September, 2000
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name ANDREW WELSH IMBRIE

Date of birth APRIL 6, 1921 Birthplace NEW YORK, N.Y.

Father's full name ANDREW CLERK IMBRIE

Occupation BUSINESS MAN Birthplace JERSEY CITY, N.J.

Mother's full name DOROTHY WELSH IMBRIE

Occupation HOUSEWIFE Birthplace PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Your spouse BARBARA CUSHING IMBRIE

Occupation SCHOOL TEACHER (BEFORE MARRIAGE) Birthplace WOODLAND, CA.

Your children ANDREW PHILIP IMBRIE

JOHN HALLER IMBRIE (DECEASED)

Where did you grow up? PRINCETON, N.J.

Present community BERKELEY, CA.

Education LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL ('38), PRINCETON UNIVERSITY A.B. '42,

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA M.A. '47.

Occupation(s) PROFESSOR OF MUSIC, U.C. BERKELEY '49 - '91.,

COMPOSER. (also PIANIST)

Areas of expertise MUSICAL COMPOSITION

Other interests or activities

Organizations in which you are active AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS,
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, BOARD OF DIRECTORS - KOUSSEVITZKY FOUNDATION
BOARD OF GOVERNORS, SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ('82-'91)

SIGNATURE Andrew W. Imbrie DATE: August 25, 2000

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW IMBRIE

I EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES; PARIS, BOULANGER AND STRAVINSKY: 1921-1939

Parents and Family

Crawford: Let's begin with the first Imbries who came from Scotland.

Imbrie: I have a family record which I'm going to show you. [lays down large genealogical chart]

Crawford: Who were the first Imbries?

Imbrie: This is my mother and father. This is my father's side of the family and this is my mother's side of the family. And if you want all the Imbries you just go back on this line. So this is my father here, and my grandfather who died before I was born, and I think maybe this was the one who came over from Scotland. But you see it goes back--these are all Scottish people. And it goes way back. A star means that it goes back even further; to maybe the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

Crawford: So the Welsh, your middle name, comes from your mother's side.

Imbrie: Yes. Herbert Welsh, John Welsh--these people were from Philadelphia. They came from Scotland, but somewhat earlier, I think. On the Frazer side of the family, which was my grandmother's side of the family, some of them were in the American Revolution. There was a general in the American Revolution on the Frazer side of the family.

Crawford: What is the Latin on the crest?

Imbrie: [laughter] *Evertendo faecundat*--"Turning over a plough makes it fecund"--it makes the things grow when you turn the soil over.

Crawford: You've said you are a fifth-generation American. Could you talk a little bit about your parents and your recollections of the early times--aunts and uncles and grandparents?

Imbrie: Well, as I may have told you, my father was a businessman in New York. He loved Princeton and he was the secretary of the class of 1895 at Princeton. I was born rather late in his life; in other words, he was in his forties when I was born. He graduated from Princeton over a hundred years ago and he was the secretary of the class; he kept up with all his classmates for a period of forty or fifty years. He loved Princeton and as soon as he was able, he moved to Princeton, so I have only very early recollections of New York; we moved to Princeton when I was five years old, and he built a house in Princeton and that's where I grew up.

My mother was from Philadelphia, originally, and I had one sister, Frances, who married Gray Dayton. And I have two nephews and a niece by her marriage. My sister died in 1974.

My mother was interested in music and that's how I got started. She sang in a chorus and took some vocal lessons when she was young in Philadelphia, and she actually went to Germany and studied there for a year or two.

Crawford: She was a serious singer, then?

Imbrie: Well, she wasn't really, but in those days young ladies very often went to Europe and went to school there for a little while--this was back in the 1890s. So she did take some voice lessons while she was there and she did sing in amateur choruses.

I don't think she ever intended to be a professional singer, but she liked music and so she was the one who got me started in my musical education. She thought I must be talented because she once asked me: "Doesn't this whistle sound like such and such a whistle?" And I said, "No, it's higher or lower or something," so she said, "Ah, he's got perfect pitch--he must be a musician!" [laughter]

Music Studies with Ann Abajian, Leo Ornstein, Olga Samaroff, Rosalyn Tureck

Imbrie: At age four or five I started studying with a woman who was a pupil of Leo Ornstein--my mother was the one who got me started with Ann Abajian and then later with Pauline Ornstein. Meanwhile the Ornsteins moved to Philadelphia and so I got my music lessons in Philadelphia when I lived in Princeton.

Ann was an Armenian--she moved to Princeton and had some students there--I think partly because of me, but partly because she just wanted to get out of New York, I suppose. And she had a bunch of students at Princeton. Later on I studied with Mrs. Ornstein in Philadelphia, and then finally I studied with Leo Ornstein.

Crawford: Who's still living, I think.

Imbrie: He's still living. He's 105 years old. He lives in Wisconsin with his daughter. He used to live in Texas.

[insert from Yale University interview][1]

Imbrie: It was a very close relationship I had with both Mrs. and Mr. Ornstein--you know both of them had a school. First they taught at the Philadelphia Musical Academy on Spruce Street and later they moved to the Art Alliance on Rittenhouse Square where they had what was called the Ornstein School of Music, that was a little later. I knew him mostly as a piano teacher but I knew that he was a composer and I think I looked on him as my first hero, you might say--the first live composer that I had an intimate, personal friendship with. He was to me a very romantic figure--a very excitable, Russian temperament--extremely nice person, but a strict disciplinarian as far as my piano studies were concerned--he wouldn't let me get away with anything.

But the way he taught piano was characteristic of him. There would be two pianos in the studio and we would play together whatever it was--Chopin or Beethoven--and we would play together and if I found that he was taking a retard then I would try to suit my performance to his so that the communication between pupil and teacher was done on a musical level, not always at a verbal level at all. If I disagreed or

---

[1]Oral History, American Music, Yale University, 1983.

if I didn't understand why this retard should be made or why this interpretation was being suggested then I would ask and he would explain. But very often it wasn't necessary--all I had to do was to see what he was doing and then I would do the same thing and then it would hit me right--and we would go right on with the lesson. But his conversation was lively and he was a very intuitive person. He encouraged my first attempts at composition.

He was very diffident about his own music. I don't know why I speak of him in the past tense--he's very much alive still, but I haven't seen him in years. He was at that time very diffident about his own music and the piece that he finally allowed me to play was one that I had heard him practicing one time and asked him what it was and finally he admitted to me that the piece was called *Tartar Dance*. It was not one of his avant-garde compositions, it sounded more like Rachmaninoff or something like that--something in the Russian tradition--more like Rimsky-Korsakov. But it was his piece and I wanted to play it, and so he finally let me play it. It was in pencil manuscript, he simply loaned me the pencil manuscript and I learned it from that. Many years later I got a call from him asking for the manuscript which I thought I had returned, and I looked all over for it and couldn't find it--I don't know whether I returned it and he lost it or whether I lost it, but the manuscript no longer exists and the Yale Music Library asked me to record a tape of his piece for them, so that's the only form in which the piece now exists. The only way you can hear that piece is by hearing me play it on a tape and that is in the Yale Archives.

I don't think he was able to give me much of a compositional technique. As far as training was concerned, I had to go elsewhere for that. But I think he made a valuable contribution to me as a composer in just being himself, by being the kind of composer he is, completely in love with music--completely immersed in it and almost inarticulate about it--showing by example what a musician can be, without being able to analyze it.

I think at that time he was more known as a pianist and as a teacher. His compositions were not widely performed. There was a performance of an orchestral piece--I think it was--it might have been something from the *Lysistrata Suite* --it was done by the Philadelphia Orchestra. That's the only time I know in Philadelphia that a major work of his was performed during my period there.

He encouraged me to compose--actually Ann Abajian Norehad encouraged me when I was very, very young to write. She encourages her piano pupils to invent little pieces--and again she doesn't know how to give them technical direction--but she has a knack for making these children be themselves musically--and what comes out is often rather fresh. And I think this a very important thing for teachers to do with young children--to give them the idea that "composition is a natural human activity," just like elimination [laughter] or anything else. You do it--it's something that you do. So I was already composing when I started studying with Ornstein himself, after a few years of training.

When I decided that I really wanted to learn the trade, I was first given a counterpoint teacher at the Philadelphia Conservatory who was a very sort of a church musician--very conservative--and he tried to teach me species counterpoint. I think I was about fifteen at the time, and it didn't take--I went through the motions but then I had to do it all over again with Boulanger only a year or two later, when I was sixteen. And then with Sessions I did it all over again--by that time it began to sink in.

But they encouraged me and would make spot comments on what I had done. Especially Leo Ornstein would react to what I had done, as a critic and as a musician, but he didn't know how to put his finger on the problems and he didn't give me an organized technical training which is what I needed really.

One year when I was about fifteen, I was getting a little rebellious and he sent me to another teacher just so that I would get a change because he thought that I was getting too sassy and I needed a little change. So I studied with Olga Samaroff and Rosalyn Tureck for one year at the Philadelphia Conservatory. It's different from the other conservatory where Ornstein taught. There were two conservatories (not including Curtis).

[end insert]

Crawford: You studied briefly with Robert Casadesus?

Imbrie: I studied with Casadesus during the summer of 1941 in Newport, Rhode Island. He was an inspiring teacher--much less "Romantic" in style than Ornstein. He insisted on technique and agility. His interpretations were crystalline and still very musical. But in comparing Debussy with Ravel (two of my favorites at the time) he remarked, "Debussy était un homme passionné." Our lessons were in French.

Crawford: How about your schooling? You mentioned Lawrenceville.

Imbrie: At Princeton I went to a school that was called Miss Fine's School in those days. It was a girl's school but they took boys up until the fourth grade. And then after that I went to something called Princeton Country Day School. These are private schools. The Princeton Country Day School at that time was just for boys, and then later on, much later, it became a coeducational school and it's now called Princeton Day School. It's still in existence as a coeducational school, but in those days they separated boys and girls.

Princeton Country Day School had a system of forms rather than grades, so I have to figure out what the grade would have been--fifth form. That would be eighth grade, I guess--no, ninth grade, and then I went to Lawrenceville for the last three years, which would be tenth, eleventh, and twelfth.

Crawford: Were you always focused on music?

Imbrie: Oh, no!

Crawford: Were you interested in science?

Imbrie: I was interested in science, yes. I was particularly interested in chemistry at that point. I had a chemical set--lots of boys had chemical sets in those days. We would mix all these things and get these nasty smells, and get these interesting colors. Then you get precipitates--you'd pour two things together and something would precipitate out, and I found it quite fascinating.

I took freshman chemistry at Princeton and I was considering taking some more chemistry, but finally I was told that if I really wanted to go any further I'd have to major in it.

Crawford: So you were good at it?

Imbrie: I don't know. I was pretty good at my studies. I got good grades in general, but I was sort of discouraged from going on into chemistry and then I finally realized that I really wanted to major in music. By that time I had already studied with Nadia Boulanger and I was already interested in composition, and I had been a pianist, I had given concerts as a pianist and I'd played with orchestras and all that--concertos and so forth.

Crawford: Was your father supportive, as well as your mother?

Imbrie: Yes. My father was not particularly musical although he was not unmusical. He just wasn't--that wasn't part of his life.

But my mother had always been interested so she was the one who made sure that I got my music lessons. When I practiced the piano she sat there and made sure that I did exactly what the teacher had told me. She came to all my piano lessons and didn't take notes, she just took mental notes and made sure that I did what the teacher asked me to. She made sure that I practiced my two hours a day or whatever it was. So she was very much involved--and my father supported all of this and all these lessons. He didn't object at all, he was very supportive.

Crawford: You didn't say very much about Olga Samaroff.

Imbrie: Well, as I mentioned, I was studying with Ornstein, and by the time I reached, I guess I must have been about fifteen, I was getting a little cantankerous--you know, getting to that age. Ornstein decided I should study with somebody else for a while because he thought that I was getting a little bit sassy and he thought I ought to have another teacher that would sort of straighten me out a little bit.

Crawford: You mean you weren't listening?

Imbrie: I was probably talking back and, you know, being a little sassy. I don't know, I can't remember what the problem was. But he decided I ought to go to somebody else and get a different point of view for a while, so I studied with Samaroff for that one year.

I think I was offered a scholarship if I would practice three or four hours a day, and I refused because I was doing very well in school and if I'd had to practice three or four hours a day I would have had to take fewer courses and I would have had to spend an extra year before getting to college.

And so Samaroff and my mother had this long conversation and she was urging my mother--"If your son is serious as a musician, he's got to practice more hours a day." And she was probably quite right about that, but I objected. I didn't want to fall behind my classmates.

I won and I just practiced as much as I could--about two hours a day. And I did all my schoolwork as well. I was sort of tolerated by Samaroff. I think she was kind of mad that I hadn't gotten this scholarship and practiced more. She was

quite right, but on the other hand, I was quite right in not wanting to give up my school.

I would have a lesson one week with her and another week with Rosalyn Tureck--I would alternate between the two of them. She, also, became a very well-known pianist--she was in her twenties at that time.

Crawford: Was she a student of Samaroff's?

Imbrie: Yes. She studied with her at Juilliard; graduated in 1935. She was hired to teach at the same institution.

I don't know how useful that really was in my training, that year that I studied with them. I think that they were very professional in their treatment of me, but they were very strict disciplinarians and they didn't have the kind of warmth that Ornstein had. And so maybe Ornstein made the right decision. I began to see what it was that I was missing.

I remember that Rosalyn Tureck at that time was particularly interested in baroque music. I think she always has been, and she gave me a whole list of the kinds of ornamentation that you use and what the different symbols mean, and I was supposed to memorize all this stuff and I said, "Well, this isn't school, this is music lessons, I'm not supposed to memorize these things, I'm supposed to play the piano." I didn't have any idea why I had to do all this at the time. It was probably a good idea and I think I must have learned something--so that's more or less the story of that one year with Samaroff and Tureck.

Recently I purchased a CD recording of Rosalyn Tureck performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, which has moved me enormously. Her rendition is exquisitely sensitive, and shows a mature understanding of the music that is in my opinion unequalled. And I confess unhesitatingly that I am delighted that she is playing the piano, not the harpsichord!

Paris, 1937, and Nadia Boulanger

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about Nadia Boulanger, because you're the only person I've known who didn't feel wholly positive about studying with her.

Imbrie: Yes, well, I know. I feel very bad. I look back on it now, and I think that I came to have second thoughts a little later. I think I was too young to really appreciate what she did--I was sixteen years old.

I've talked to people like Elliott Carter and Roger Sessions--well, Roger Sessions had a very strange relationship with her--but Elliott Carter was absolutely sold on her and so were lots of other people that have worked with her. I just found that for me, at the age of sixteen, it wasn't what I wanted.

Crawford: What did Roger Sessions say about his experience?

Imbrie: Boulanger tried to dissuade Sessions from divorcing his first wife--Boulanger was a devout Catholic. After that, they became somewhat estranged. Before that, Sessions and she were apparently very close.

Crawford: Why was she the teacher in Paris to see?

Imbrie: Well, she had that reputation, that's all. My parents were asking people whom should I work with and my mother was told about Nadia Boulanger. These friends told her they were going to go there themselves and offered to kind of look after me and that I could go with them. And so my mother decided that this was a good idea. It probably was a good idea.

Crawford: What do you remember of her studio at Fontainebleau?

Imbrie: Fontainebleau? Well, it was like a seminar. We had maybe ten or fifteen students there and we would play our pieces and she would criticize them. Then we'd have private lessons, too. No, excuse me, that's not right. In the seminar, she would play pieces by Stravinsky or would analyze them--or pieces by Beethoven and would analyze them and we would take notes. And then we would have private lessons with her and that is when we did the counterpoint and we would show her our compositions. And she did look at the pieces I was writing, as well as my counterpoint exercises. I was excused from ear training because I had absolute pitch and so I didn't have to do that.

I don't remember in great detail what her criticisms of my compositions were, I just have a general sense of this kind of authoritarian mode.

Crawford: What was she like?

Imbrie: Well, she was a very striking woman in a way. She always wore black. I think she was in mourning for her sister who had died many, many years before, and she maintained this constant image of being in mourning all of the time. She stood up very straight and she would speak in English--her English was quite good--but her tastes were extremely French. I mean, they were, she just adored everything by French composers. [laughter]

That was something that seemed strange to me because in America we were much more interested in German, Italian, whatever. She obviously had to say good things about Beethoven, but I remember she would call him "Beethoff." [laughter]

Crawford: *Extrrraordinaire!*

Imbrie: Yes, *extraordinaire*, and all of that. But she was not interested in the Austrian School at all or in the chromatic school.

Crawford: Did she object to Schoenberg in particular?

Imbrie: I think she objected but she didn't talk about it very much. She concentrated on Stravinsky. She absolutely adored Stravinsky, of course, and although I was told that when Stravinsky started writing in a twelve-tone manner, which he did later--this is much later, of course, it was during the sixties--I didn't hear her say this, myself, but some people told me that she was not interested in Stravinsky's late twelve-tone work. It was just old men playing games, was her attitude towards it. I mean I think she had this very French attitude--everything should be French.

I think she liked Debussy and Ravel but she was more interested in the younger generation of French composers, people like Jean Francaix, I think his name was [born 1912 in Paris]. She liked everything to be elegant and sort of beautifully proportioned and pretty, and I think she was very interested in making sure that everybody had a very strong technique, the way you'd learned in the past at the conservatory--you learned to write fugues, you learned to do everything according to the textbook solution.

Crawford: It's almost like the Ecole des Beaux Arts approach--

Imbrie: Yes, it's the same idea. It's that kind of academic approach, or what used to be called academic.

Crawford: Did you live in Fontainebleau?

Imbrie: Yes, we lived in a little sort of hotel-like place. I had a roommate who was a violinist and we remained good friends after that. I remember he invited me up to Maine--his family went to Maine in the summer. His whole family were musicians and they used to play chamber music together. So I got to know him. Later on he taught in southern California and I think his son went to Cal, as a matter of fact.

Meeting with Stravinsky

Crawford: You mentioned meeting Stravinsky while you were in Paris then. What details do you remember about him?

Imbrie: That was one occasion, and I went to concerts, too, later, to just meet him and ask for his autograph. I still have a score with his autograph on it and all that kind of thing.

Crawford: Where did you meet?

Imbrie: He had an apartment in Paris. As I recall, it was a typical Paris apartment--it had overstuffed armchairs and bookshelves, and it's what one would expect in a city apartment. He didn't appear right away--all the students were kind of waiting for him and then he just appeared, walked in and sat down and looked at our music and made these remarks.

Crawford: You played for him?

Imbrie: Yes, I played these little pieces I'd written and then he told me, "Ten years from now you will hear it the way I do."

Crawford: What did he mean?

Imbrie: I was flattered because I don't think it was a put-down, I think it meant he was giving me the benefit of the doubt. It was obviously a piece that was not mature in any way, it was just a childhood attempt to write a piece, and it was very simple and it was nothing he could criticize in any meaningful way because it didn't raise any serious problems. I think it might have been rather naive and put together rather awkwardly.

I don't even remember what it was like, now, but I had the feeling that what he was trying to tell me was, "Go on with your studies and ten years from now you will hear this as I hear it now." He was making me feel as if ten years from now

I'd be like him--I would have matured to the point where I could hear it the way he did.

Crawford: It's a very charitable thing to say.

Imbrie: Well, I think it was. That's the way I decided to take it. Maybe he was just saying it in order to get rid of me, you know. Who knows what he really meant. He'd probably say, "Oh this is just a kid and I'll have to say something nice to him. He's only sixteen. I don't want to hurt his feelings." Who knows what was really going on in his mind.

Crawford: Was Paris overwhelming? Did you get to experience it?

Imbrie: Oh, yes. Well, it wasn't overwhelming, we just had a lot of fun. I mean, this guy and I would go into the city and go to concerts or we would sort of explore and see the sights. And we'd go home--there's a train ride to Fontainebleau which took about an hour, or maybe forty-five minutes--something like that. So we'd get home late at night.

Sometimes we got home very late. I remember, it was this time of year--you know, late June, early July--getting home and the sun was rising already because Paris is further north than we are and so in June the sun gets up very early and goes to bed very late. I remember getting home from Paris when it was already dawn and feeling this was very exciting, you know. [laughter]

I did play for Boulanger again much later when I was on the American Academy of Rome prize right after World War II. I made an appointment to see Boulanger and I played her my piano sonata. This was the first time that I felt that at last I had a piece that I could call my own and I did want to see what she'd think of it, because I'd had my counterpoint, I'd had my fugue, and now I had written a complete piano sonata which I had performed and which I thought was a good piece, and I wanted her opinion.

After playing it for her, I waited for her response and she started a diatribe against Schoenberg, and I pointed out to her that this was not a twelve-tone piece and in fact it was a tonal piece and in fact the next to last page was one long dominant pedal which I pointed out to her--and I assure you that pedal is there, it's very much in evidence. She said, "But one doesn't hear this." So it meant to me simply that the chromaticism of the surface was something that prevented her from hearing the tonal relations underneath and if you heard

that piece today, I think would agree that it is strongly tonally oriented, it is quite chromatic but it is not in any sense atonal. It was still in a period when I felt the need for this kind of a tonal organization.

II STUDIES WITH ROGER SESSIONS: 1939-1942

First String Quartet: 1942

[insert from Yale interview]

Imbrie: After the summer in Paris, I started my studies with Roger Sessions. In fact, I had one more year at Lawrenceville, before going to Princeton, but I started studying with Sessions privately.

Sessions was in Princeton, and I again took counterpoint and harmony, and all that kind of thing and I also showed him my compositions. And that's when I really began to make progress, I felt, because I immediately--or not immediately but little by little I began to see that this was where I was going to learn my trade. This man was the person that I could really study with. He was a great teacher. I think most people who have studied with him have to agree that he was a really great teacher.

My freshman year at Princeton I was in the fugue class and he kept saying, "If you want to bring me pieces that you are writing, please do so, it's important that you study fugue, but I don't want to stop you from composing."

So occasionally I would show him something, but I was very dissatisfied at that time with what I was doing. The pieces that I was writing seemed very eclectic, which indeed they were. And I could see where all the influences were and they weren't influences that I particularly wanted to stick with, but I think this happens--now that I'm a teacher myself I recognize the symptoms in many, many pupils--there is a time when you are trying to absorb everything around you and you simply haven't integrated anything yet, you haven't found a musical voice or a musical personality, you haven't got the technique yet, and so you are very unhappy and very frustrated

because you want to say something and you haven't got the wherewithal and these influences keep coming in and you keep spouting out undigested morsels of things from every possible source--and that's what I was doing.

Sessions found a very good solution. At Princeton at the end of the year there's a two-week period when everyone does a special project, they call it a reading project. My project was to write a piece a day for two weeks. No matter how bad I thought the piece was, it had to be a complete, finished piece, however short, and it was very difficult for me to do this, to complete an entire piece, even if it was only twenty measures long or ten measures long. But I did it and the pieces were absolutely god-awful. I still have them--one or two are a little better than the others, but they were every possible style you could imagine, and every possible borrowing.

Well, the effect of this was a kind of catharsis, because the next thing I had to do was my senior thesis which I did under Sessions' supervision and that was my First String Quartet, which is the first piece that I still call my own and which I would be willing to have performed. In other words, that is my first real piece. The moment I started writing that quartet I suddenly felt that I would be able to finish it and that it would be complete.

So it was the first thing I could say is in my own style, however naive it may sound now. I think Sessions did the right thing by making me write that piece every day for two weeks. It had some sort of cathartic effect on me which enabled me to break through this barrier and start composing.

It was performed at Princeton by a quartet from the Westminster Choir School and then it was performed in New York. Sessions arranged for a performance at the ISCM [International Society for Contemporary Music] and this was the first time that my music was heard in public. It received a New York Music Critic's Circle Award for that year, so it was a major thing.

It was performed in New York either in '43 or '44, at the ISCM, and of course I was in the army at the time and was not composing, and I didn't get out of the army for two more years after that, so everything sort of ground to a halt during World War II. But it certainly did have an impact because my name was now known as a composer, which it hadn't been before. As soon as I got out of the army I went on studying with Sessions at Berkeley and I wrote a piece or two at that time--eventually

all these pieces got performed--but it was the real beginning of my career, such as it is.

Then of course I have to add to this that the musical scene, as I said before, in those days was nothing like what it is today. There were not that many composers around. The competition simply wasn't as strong as it would be today. So it sounds more extraordinary today if you try to think of it in today's musical light than it would in that year. There weren't that many young people writing music at that time, that's all there is to it.

Sessions and Serialism

Imbrie: Sessions didn't introduce us to serialism as such at that time. He never taught people to write twelve-tone music as far as I know. In fact he himself didn't embrace serialism until about the same time as Stravinsky did. In other words, about 1953. Before that time he admired Schoenberg, but he felt that the twelve-tone technique was not for him because it was a modular way of writing music. It was like mosaics. You take a little crystalline structure and you reduplicate it like a template, over and over and over again. You can change the characteristics of this little crystal--you can turn it upside down or you can shine the light through it from different directions--but it remains a little entity and he liked to think in big phrases. For a long time he found it difficult to reconcile his own way of musical thinking with the methods imposed by serialism. He finally found a solution to his own satisfaction, and he then began saying, "It's just like learning any other technique, you have to master it first. Once you've mastered it and made it your own then it's perfectly viable." But he kept insisting that the twelve-tone technique itself could not in his opinion account for the larger structure. That the piece could certainly be conceived in terms of the series, but that the series itself could not account for the larger scale relationships. This had to be aural.

He spoke about Schoenberg. He was personally acquainted with Schoenberg more than he was with Stravinsky although he knew both of them. He did speak of his conversations with Schoenberg, but most of what I remember was again that what he was interested in was the essential mastery of these composers.

He gave us the impression that these were two very important composers and that this was more important than the differences between them. In other words, in these days it's hard to remember how music was divided into two camps. You had to be either a twelve-tone composer or a neo-classic composer, as it were. The musical life was sharply divided and Sessions was one of the few people that seemed to be above this dichotomy.

I had the impression that he was trying to find a synthesis, and I think he succeeded in a way in finding a synthesis. As most things happen in this world eventually the strongest dichotomies turn out to be simply two sides of a coin. And come along a few years later and you realize that you can learn from both and that you go on from there, it's not a question of who's right and who's wrong.

I don't know anyone else at that time who didn't really take sides--I mean Boulanger was in the Stravinsky camp, Copland was in the Stravinsky camp as it were. And there were other people who were more in the Schoenberg camp whose music didn't get performed very much because the Stravinsky camp and the Copland camp was much stronger at that time in America than the Schoenberg camp, they were very much the out party, they were sort of the underground.

I didn't get to New York and involve myself in that scene very much. At the time we're speaking of, remember, I was an undergraduate at Princeton, one of about three music majors, then right after that (in 1942) I was drafted, went into the army, and after that I came out to Berkeley for my master's degree. So that I wasn't really involved in the New York scene directly very much.

Military Service, 1942-1946

Imbrie: During my four years of army service I was a Japanese translator and I was based near Washington, D.C., doing work for the government. They trained us to do this. It was about a nine-months intensive course in Japanese. I was not an interpreter, I was a translator; we got some training in spoken Japanese, but the emphasis was on translation of telegraphic materials so we learned a special kind of Japanese which is used for telegraphic communications.

Later I went to Japan when I was on my second Guggenheim in 1960. I decided I really had to see what Japan was like so I spent a year there--got back some of my Japanese. I've never been very fluent, but it's not the kind of language one becomes very fluent in.

I was very interested in the opportunity to study Japanese. Of course, it had nothing to do with music and so the only musical activity I carried on those four years was putting on shows with the other people in the place where I worked. These were musicals and tunes written in a sort of Gershwin style--not notated; I just improvised them. There was no reason to notate them because the people couldn't read music and I simply taught them the tunes and I accompanied them on the piano, we put on these little ad-hoc shows. Since then I've written them down for my son. He insisted on playing them, so I've written them down for him.

III STUDIES AT UC BERKELEY, 1946-1947, AND COMPOSER'S FORUM

Sessions and Milhaud Schools

Imbrie: After the war and before I was released from the army in 1946, I was sent to California. They were going to send me overseas, but then I had been in the service for so long that they decided I was able to choose not to go overseas. So I stayed in California for a while and then went back East, but while I was here I came to see Sessions quite frequently, whenever I had the opportunity. As soon as I got out of the service I came back here to complete my compositional training, and while I was doing that I wrote an orchestral piece, *Ballad*, and I went to Rome and the following year the orchestral piece was performed by the San Francisco Symphony on my return.

As soon as I got out of the service I had written a trio for piano, violin, and cello. The Princeton music department was putting on a concert for the Princeton bicentennial and I wrote this for that concert and it was performed there, and it was performed in San Francisco. And then at that point, 1946-1947, I came to Berkeley to get my master's under Roger Sessions who was here at that time.

One of the things that impressed me enormously while I was studying with Sessions was his Second Symphony, which was given its premiere by the San Francisco Symphony under Monteux, the year I was doing my graduate work. The students of Sessions went to the rehearsals and followed the score at every rehearsal and in fact we corrected the parts before the first rehearsal and so we were all immersed in this piece. And listening to it--it was perhaps the most decisive orchestral experience, as a composer, that I'd had up to that point. I was absolutely bowled over by the orchestral possibilities of this kind of music, which really hadn't dawned on me up to that

point. I thought of contemporary music as something that I was still struggling with, something that was problematical and I found Sessions' style problematical even while I was studying with him, until this piece.

When I heard the rehearsals and the performance of this piece I suddenly was absolutely swept off my feet, and this is the kind of influence that is very lasting. I don't think that my music comes out sounding like his piece, but I know that it again sort of cleared away some underbrush, and made me see what the possibilities really were. Instead of something that I had to comprehend, it was something that I now intuitively comprehended, without really comprehending it. But I mean it hit me below the belt, if you like, in a way that nothing had before.

In Sessions' seminar at Berkeley I met some contemporaries of mine, including Leon Kirchner and Earl Kim, who had both been students of Schoenberg in Los Angeles. These were the strongest personalities amongst my immediate confreres in the composition seminar. Then a very important presence was that of Darius Milhaud, who was teaching at Mills and some of his students there with whom we got to be good friends. We would sometimes go over to his class at Mills or they would come over to Sessions' class and we would get to know each other.

The way that we got to know each other best was by organizing our own series of concerts, called the Composer's Forum. These concerts were given over a period of ten years or so. We gave them in San Francisco three times a year--I'm speaking now not only of my days as a graduate student but after my return from Rome when I started here as an instructor. A lot of these same people were still around and the concerts continued for several years.

What I liked about them was the fact that, in terms of the dichotomy between the diatonic and the chromatic schools, if you like, one felt much less the importance of this dichotomy in San Francisco than one did in New York. For one thing, it was a question of all of us having to hang together or we would hang separately. I think it was a very good thing to be in a place like San Francisco, a much smaller city where contemporary music in order to survive had to be presented by everyone concerned in a friendly atmosphere.

The Milhaud school was very much more diatonic, and his pupils were a very interesting bunch of people, some of them were jazz-oriented. There was obviously a very strong French influence in the music that they wrote for Milhaud.

Crawford: Would you elaborate on that?

Imbrie: Darius Milhaud is famous for writing enormous amounts of music himself. He churned it out very quickly and he encouraged his students to do the same thing. And then if they didn't like something, he told them not to spend a lot of time revising, just throw it away and write another piece. And so they tended to write very, very fluently.

We [Sessions' students] tended to be very careful and try to fix things until we got them just right. And so we tended to be less risk-taking.

I think we did each other a lot of good. We made them think twice, and they made us loosen up a little bit. And so I think we had a very good influence on one another.

Crawford: Which students do you remember from that time?

Imbrie: William Overton Smith is one of the chief ones. He was a very good friend and is still a very good friend of mine. He's now retired from the University of Washington. He's a clarinet player and was a jazz clarinet player, and has done jazz arrangements for Dave Brubeck, for example. He has maintained a jazz career, but he also does very experimental music for clarinet. He's an excellent musician. I'm very fond of him, though I see him not as often as I'd like. Also Howard Brubeck.

Smith was a good example of the Milhaud group and then the Sessions group contained people like Earl Kim and Leon Kirchner who were both at Harvard. They've both retired, now, but they have had long and distinguished careers in the east. They studied with Sessions along with me. [N.B. Earl Kim died recently]

Composer's Forum: 1946-1966

Crawford: How did Composer's Forum get started?

Imbrie: It started before I got to Berkeley in '45 and '46. I was still in the service at that time.

There were some students at Cal who were inspired by Jane Hohfeld, who's now Jane Hohfeld Galante, to form a little group and perform music and discuss music with one another. She sort of encouraged them to get together, and they put up notices and they'd have their little workshops and they would have discussions. And finally they gave some public concerts in '46.

Crawford: Her parents sponsored some of those, didn't they?

Imbrie: Yes. They sponsored some, and others did, too. And from that point on it was a Bay Area-wide thing.

The idea of it was to be an independent organization, not affiliated with any institution. At first it was here at Cal but as soon as they gave public concerts they decided not to be associated with Cal, or with Stanford, or with Mills, or with any other place, but simply to have their own organization not affiliated with either an institution or with a club or any of that sort of thing.

And the membership was supposed to be unrestricted. In other words, anyone could become a member just by paying dues. And there were both concerts and workshops, that is, professional concerts, where tickets were sold and the musicians were paid union scale.

Crawford: Oh, union scale?

Imbrie: Yes, the union later on gave a us break and let us pay a little bit less, but the idea was to make ourselves into professionals, as it were, instead of just students.

Crawford: You told me you did everything involved with putting on a concert.

Imbrie: Well, the whole group did all the arranging. And there were concerts and workshops and later there were commissions.

They organized a commissioning program and they even organized a recording program. Neither of these things went very far. I don't think there are more than a half a dozen pieces that were commissioned or recorded under this program, but at least the effort was to make an impact on the community.

Crawford: What was Jane Galante doing at the time? Was she a student here?

Imbrie: She was a student here, but later she was very, very much involved with the organization.

There were other people who were very much involved; Roger Levenson is another example. He died some years ago, but he was very active. He wasn't a musician. He was originally from the east. I think he came from the state of Maine, originally, but for a while he was a high school teacher, and he had an independent income and was very interested in printing. He had one of these old fashioned printing presses--a job press--he called it the Tamalpais Press and he had his office right near the university in a little shop.

He got very interested in contemporary music and in the Composer's Forum and he was a very good organizer. He and Jane both helped us do all the practical things that have to be done.

Crawford: Were most of the programs at the Museum of Modern Art?

Imbrie: Yes. Most of them were there, in the Veterans building, and the programs emphasized works from the West Coast. The idea was to help this community come of age as an important cultural center. We were very anxious to see that San Francisco would be recognized as an important center. We were very anxious to get together and do this and so the emphasis was on works from the West Coast and especially northern California and not limited, however, to those places. Other American works and interesting European works that we were interested in we also had performed.

In 1951 we finally affiliated with the ISCM--that's the International Society for Contemporary Music--but we were completely independent as far as our programming and decisions of that sort were made.

We drew up a constitution in 1954. Roger Nixon was the president one year; that was '56. Larry Austin, who is now in Texas. Ed Colby. Charles Cushing, who was a professor at Berkeley and actually my wife's uncle. Vincent Duckles who was the music librarian. Alfred Frankenstein, the music critic--I want to go back and talk about him a little bit. Robert Erickson, who later went down to southern California.

Crawford: San Diego, I think.

Imbrie: San Diego. Lou Gottlieb, who became an entertainer. He died some time ago, but he had a group that did nightclub entertainment, that sort of thing--but he also had a Ph.D. in

musicology because he had promised his father he would get a Ph.D. And as soon as he did he went into performance, which is what he really wanted to do. And he made quite a success of it.

And then Jane Hohfeld, of course, and myself, and Wendell Otey was a local composer, and Neil Sur, who's now at the University of New Hampshire, if I'm not mistaken. And Jonathan Elkus who is now at Davis, the son of Albert Elkus, who was chairman of the music department at the time.

Those were our officers in the year '56. We had annual meetings, and there was such a thing as an executive committee of nine members who were rotated on a yearly basis. So there were always six old members and three new members. And you couldn't become a member for a year after you'd had your three-year stint. This way the idea was to keep the personnel changing so it wouldn't become just one set of people making all the decisions. It was thought to be a little more democratic if we did it that way.

Programming and Commissions for Composer's Forum

Crawford: That committee did the programming?

Imbrie: Well, there was a program committee. The executive committee had nine members but then the program committee was chosen from that by the executive committee. I think there were only three members on the program committee, but that would change every year. They made sure that the program committee didn't stay the same year after year.

Then there was a commissioning committee and a financial committee and all that sort of thing. But commissions as related to artistic standards raise an issue, of course, because the idea was to get people interested in commissioning through the Composer's Forum. And of course the amounts of money were very small in those days.

Crawford: What did they amount to? What would sustain a work?

Imbrie: Oh, a hundred dollars or something like that. But of course in the forties and fifties that was a lot more than it would be now.

There was quite a discussion as to how the commissioning committee would be set up. For instance, they started by saying it was the privilege of the donor of the commission in consultation with the subcommittee on commissions to choose the composer. [laughter] Of course the donor may want to commission a friend of his or hers.

Crawford: Of course!

Imbrie: And the question is, supposing it was something that the program committee didn't feel was up to the standards of what they wanted to do? That would have created a very tricky situation, you see, and so they had to figure out some way to adjudicate a situation like that.

Crawford: It seems that there was a wealth of composers to choose from.

Imbrie: Yes, there were a lot--there were some wealthy people in the neighborhood who might have a friend that was an amateur composer and they said, "Well, we'll commission him through the Composer's Forum." Then the Composer's Forum might feel obligated to perform the piece, and so there had to be some way to pass judgment on these issues.

What they finally decided--I wrote this down--is, "The commissions committee shall have the absolute authority to accept a commission from any person wishing to donate one, but in the event that it wishes to refuse one, it will refer the decision to the executive committee. A vote of five members of the executive committee present at any such meeting shall be required to reverse or sustain such negative recommendation of the commissioning committee."

So you see, it was very legalistic. But I think there was some concern that the quality of the composition should be secure if it were commissioned through the group, and the program committee wanted to have some control over the kind of music that would be commissioned. It was all very legalistic,but actually there were only, as I say, five or six pieces commissioned throughout the time.

Crawford: The list I have includes Leonard Rosenman's *Six Songs on Texts of Lorca*, Smith's Suite for Violin and Clarinet, Jack Holloway's String Quartet No. 1, Leon Kirchner's String Quartet No. 1, Earl Kim's *Letters Found Near a Suicide*, and your *Serenade*, commissioned by Mrs. Edward Hohfeld in 1952.

Imbrie: Yes.

Crawford: I wanted to ask you too about some of the other musical activity--Lou Harrison's, for instance, and those who had studied with Cowell. Were they part of this?

Imbrie: No, they weren't. We didn't know them, actually. We were not particularly aware of their existence--I guess it was because they were not associated with universities, and most of us were associated with universities, that's how we knew one another. We just didn't connect with those people at all.

Cage and Harrison were in San Francisco in 1940 only. Harrison studied with Cowell in San Francisco in 1934-35, and settled in Aptos in 1952.

I know that Alfred Frankenstein chaired a meeting of the ISCM in San Francisco, but that was some time before I ever got here and before the Composer's Forum. He'd had previous experience of the ISCM, I know, through that. The nineteenth ISCM festival was at Berkeley, 1942.

Associations with Other Composers

Crawford: You mentioned that you got together with composers--young composers, student composers--on other campuses. That's an intriguing idea.

Imbrie: Well, later on we formed associations with composers in southern California, for example, and also at the University of Utah and Brigham Young University in that area, in the Salt Lake City area.

For three or four years we went to Los Angeles. All of us would drive down there and then we'd put on concerts together with the groups there and interact with them. Or we'd go to Salt Lake City and they would host us, or we would host the others when they came. It would take place at one university or another, and in this way we got to know some of the regional things that were going on in other places. So there'd be a weekend or three or four days of concerts.

Crawford: Would this have been UCLA?

Imbrie: UCLA or USC or sometimes it would be at Cal, sometimes it would be at Mills or at Stanford--I can't remember exactly. And both Brigham Young and the University of Utah were involved.

Crawford: In Los Angeles was that the Monday Evening Concerts?

Imbrie: It was a university thing. It was always hosted by a university. And a faculty member from a university would come along.

I remember Roger Sessions came down one time with us to Los Angeles while he was still teaching here, and I guess I was already on the faculty at that time, too, so we would all drive down together. We would have a good time, you know. We'd stay overnight at a motel and we would kid around and have a very good jolly time and it was lots of fun.

Crawford: Who do you remember from the various music departments in the Bay Area and Los Angeles?

Imbrie: There were lots of very good people. William Carlin, Jules Langert, Robert Helps, Leonard Rosenman--

Crawford: Did Sessions' students get to know Milhaud well?

Imbrie: We got to know him. We would attend his seminars and his students would attend our seminars with Roger Sessions. Milhaud was a very straight-faced person--he always looked absolutely as if he had no expression on his face at all, but he always had a good sense of humor and you'd never know what he was going to say next.

He had very good judgment on student compositions; he would make a few remarks that were quite enlightening. I had the feeling that he just encouraged his students and was very interested in having them write more music. I know that one time he played us some of his music that was not available. He played tapes or recordings of music of his that he'd just written and it was not available, and we would listen to that. It was very good.

I think he must have been a very good teacher because the morale was very high in a group of his students. And again, as I say, a lot of them had had jazz backgrounds but they weren't studying jazz with him, they were writing string quartets. I know that Bill Smith would sit under a tree and write his music. He didn't go to a piano. He was a clarinetist and so the piano was not his instrument. He would just write the music outdoors or wherever he was, and I think he got that from Milhaud, this idea of just you can always write music, any place, any time. You don't worry about it, you just do it. So there was a spontaneity, there's a wonderful spontaneity.

Crawford: Enviable.

Imbrie: Yes, and I think that was the Milhaud influence. There was a kind of spontaneous approach to music and not to fret, just to do it.

Crawford: He stayed for a long time in the Bay Area, didn't he? Through the sixties.

Imbrie: He used to commute every year. He'd spend one year at Mills and then one year at Paris and he would teach alternatively in these two places for a long time.

Remembering Roger Sessions

Crawford: You've talked a great deal about Sessions and I won't want to duplicate that, but perhaps there's something more personal you'd want to say about him--you were certainly very, very close.

Imbrie: What would you like to know?

Crawford: Something more personal about him, for instance, his approach to teaching. I think you mentioned that he gave you very intense assignments that were a bit cathartic to just to get you going.

Imbrie: Oh, that was when I was an undergraduate at Princeton. He just said, "If you're having writer's block, why don't we try this." There was a two-week period in which we were supposed to have a project. All undergraduates of Princeton did this. Whatever field they were studying they would have a two-week project at the end of the term in which most of them would write a term paper, but in my case he just said, "Why don't you write a piece every day for those two weeks." It didn't have to be a long piece but it had to be complete. I think that was a very good exercise--in a sense, it was a little like the Milhaud approach except here it was sort of mandated. [laughter]

Crawford: So it wasn't his regular kind of assignment.

Imbrie: No, it wasn't the regular way that he taught. No, usually you would bring him your work and he would play it at the keyboard. He would sightread it and then he would make comments.

I found it very helpful to watch what he was doing with other students. We'd have a seminar and I would watch him--I think I've said this--but he would sit at the piano and read the student's composition. We would cluster behind him and look on at the score over his shoulder, and then he would make comments to the other students.

I remember asking myself, "What would I say about this piece if I were in his shoes? What do I think of this piece?" And he would always put his finger right on the problem--something would bother me and I couldn't quite figure out what it was and then he would put his finger right on what the problem was. So when he got around to talking about my piece, I figured he knew what he was talking about. [laughter]

Your ego is always involved in these things, you know. Especially when there are other students around, you don't want your piece torn to shreds. He was very kindly about it, though. He didn't just say insulting things, or things that would offend or that would make a person shrivel. He would always say things in a very kind and diplomatic way so that you never felt that he was putting you down, and that was very important especially with other students hanging around and listening.

Whenever I taught a seminar after that, I just hoped that I could do it half as well as he did. I thought that if I could do it half as well as he did, I would feel that I've succeeded.

It is very difficult to teach half a dozen students in a seminar when you're dealing with one student at a time because you have to make sure there isn't a crap game going on in the other corner of the room.

Crawford: Keep their attention.

Imbrie: Yes, you have to keep them there. You have to keep saying things in such a way that it might be useful to the other students as well as to the student you're talking to. You try to generalize the problem, to say, "Right here is an example of a certain kind of problem that might arise." And you try to get the students to contribute their insights into it. He was able to do that. And it was a very good experience for me.

I prefer teaching students individually because I don't have to worry about the other students and keeping them involved in that manner. And that way I find that I can concentrate on what that student is doing and I don't have to worry about other people and I can spend as much time as

necessary to do it. And I end up doing that because I'm a little lazier than I used to be, I guess.

Crawford: You'd rather have them one on one.

Imbrie: I'd rather have them one at a time simply because it's easier. And I can spend more time and be very frank and discuss various things. You don't have to say, "Oh, my gosh, I've got to go on and see this next person because we've only got another half an hour." So there are advantages to both sides.

I took private lessons with him, too, before I got to university.

Crawford: Yes, I knew you had. But he was a wonderful model for your own teaching?

Imbrie: Yes, he was a real role model for me in teaching.

Composer's Forum and the Critics

Crawford: To return to Composer's Forum now--you have said that Frankenstein reviewed almost every concert for the [*San Francisco*] *Chronicle*. How many concerts were there each year?

Imbrie: There were three concerts, that's not including workshops which were informal. The workshops were not professional--I mean they were not paid, they were just groups getting together and playing music for one another and discussing it informally. There would be little postcards sent to all the members about a workshop that was going to take place at such and such a university if anybody wanted to come. And usually quite a few people would show up.

But the real concerts were given in San Francisco, and there were three of those in each year. And those were paid; for those you bought your ticket and the musicians were paid.

The group gave its first public concerts in '46, and most of them were covered. I think in the archives I noticed that once in a while there was a notation that this concert had not been reviewed and that the reviewers apologized because there

were some very big concerts going on that the public wanted to hear about and they didn't have enough personnel to cover all of them. And they were very apologetic. But most of the critics really felt an obligation to show up at the Composer's Forum.

Crawford: Was Fried then on the [*San Francisco*] *Examiner*?

Imbrie: Fried was very much a part of it, yes. Frankenstein and Fried and people from other papers, too, were very interested in showing up for those and reporting on them fully. And Frankenstein was always very encouraging. He didn't whitewash --I mean, there were things that he didn't like as well as others and he would say so.

Crawford: I have here a passage that he wrote about your Second Quartet that I find interesting. This was a 1955 Composer's Forum concert and he said, "Imbrie's quartet is not an easy piece to play and its performance was one of the California String Quartet's major achievements of the season both individually and collectively. This is music of the profoundest integrity. With the marvelously expressive, superbly shaped slow movement and a finale that digs in with intense vitality these two movements are the best Imbrie we have so far heard. The first [movement] I found difficult to take in on a single hearing, which is my fault rather than the composer's." Could you comment on the review?

Imbrie: What can one say? It shows, in any event, the critic's sympathetic attitude towards new music. As I've said, the First Quartet was written as an undergraduate at Princeton, so I was only twenty when I wrote the First Quartet; it's the first work of mine that I wouldn't mind having performed.

Crawford: Yes, I've read that you said that.

Imbrie: Roger Sessions saw to it that it got a performance in New York. It got the New York Critic's Circle Award for that year and so it was a successful performance. It was recorded by the Juilliard Quartet on an old 1940s recording.

Crawford: And performed by the California String Quartet?

The California Quartet and Other Forum Performers

Imbrie: Yes. By the way, the California String Quartet was a very distinguished group. Felix Khuner was the first violinist. David Schneider was the second violinist and Detlev Olshausen was the wonderful violist. And sometimes George Barati would play cello, sometimes Helen Stross, as I recall. But they were very faithful and they did a lot for us. They performed a lot of works for the Composer's Forum.

We would have other combinations of various sizes, and there was a concert which was sponsored by a local Italian person named [Frank] DeBellis and he was interested in doing pieces by Dallapiccola. We also got a break from the union and so we were able to hire more than the usual number of musicians. I couldn't tell you who they all were, but it was a very important concert. I think on that one the Berg *Chamber Concerto* was done which takes quite a few instruments. That was on the tenth anniversary concert, and so we were able to expand.

One time we had a Forum concert by the California Symphony with Murray Graetzer as the conductor. That concert was in '55. They did Milhaud's Fourth Symphony, they did a piece of mine, some songs with orchestra accompaniment, a piece by Robert Erickson, and then Sessions' First Symphony. That was in November of '55, a concert with all Forum members, or people involved with the Forum.

Crawford: The reviewer particularly liked your songs.

Imbrie: Yes, I could do those with piano accompaniment but I also had an orchestral accompaniment. When I was in Italy I met a young American conductor who was conducting local small orchestras in Italy and I orchestrated the songs for that group. So they were sung, and they got their premiere orchestral performance in a town in Italy.

Crawford: Lucca?

Imbrie: In Lucca, that's right. That was a great experience.

Crawford: Who else was involved in the Forum at the time?

Imbrie: There was a clarinetist, Jerome Rosen, who's now at Davis, and Morton Subotnik, a violist, Elizabeth Bell, and pianist Bernard Abramovitsch--all very good musicians. And then there was Elkus and Smith.

Crawford: It seems that the Forum was quite well recognized then.

Imbrie: Well, in the local area and to some extent elsewhere, and I think I was--and most of us were--very concerned about putting San Francisco on the map, as it were. I think we were very excited about it.

As I have said before, the New York scene was sort of divided between the Schoenberg disciples on the one hand, who were mostly academics, and the Copland disciples, who wanted to write American music, and it was very hard. The good thing about Sessions was that he didn't belong comfortably in either of those camps. He was his own person, and I think coming to San Francisco was a very good thing for a student like myself at the time because then you didn't feel this kind of pressure to belong to one camp or another.

We used to say to the Milhaud students, "We'll have to hang together or we'll all hang separately because we need each other's support." And the area was sufficiently small so that you couldn't afford to put on your own concerts unless you got together with all the other composers. And that's where the Sessions-Milhaud relationship was so helpful because they were good friends and we got to be good friends.

Elliott Carter and the International Society for Contemporary Music

Crawford: I know that you worked at the time to have your works represented on the international level. How successful were your efforts?

Imbrie: The trouble with the ISCM was that they would pick works from the entire country and the chance of your getting your work on some European program were very small as it turned out.

Crawford: Who was represented?

Imbrie: I don't know that any of us were ever represented on the international level. If so, I don't remember. I'm sure I wasn't. Maybe somebody else was.

Crawford: I read that Elliott Carter was on the international jury. Was he helpful to American composers?

Imbrie: Oh, I think so. I first met Elliott Carter when I was in Rome --not the first time, but when I was there in the early fifties. I was there on a Guggenheim Fellowship and I spent a year at the Academy. That's where I first met him and he had just written his First String Quartet at that time. I got to know him and we had long conversations, and I've always liked him--my music is not at all like his but we got along pretty well. We've kept up with Carter and his wife ever since.

I think he's very fair and he's very open-minded. He's very interested in all kinds of things that go on, and he doesn't insist on everybody writing his kind of music; he's very interested in whatever's going on. I've been in New York and we've gone to concerts together and he'd be fascinated by something totally different from what he, himself, would do, so I'm sure that he was very fair in his judgments on any kind of board or committee, although I don't know that he would necessarily favor Americans over Europeans or anything like that, he just was interested in whatever was going on. He's probably the most widely respected American composer in Europe these days.

Crawford: Is that true?

Imbrie: Yes, I think that the Europeans go for him. Well, he's a great friend of Pierre Boulez, for example. Boulez plays his music on a very regular basis.

A Close Friendship with Robert Commanday

Crawford: Among the critics here Robert Commanday, who followed Frankenstein, was always on the case for modern music, wasn't he?

Imbrie: Yes. I don't know whether I mentioned this before, but he and I were very close friends. We were in the same outfit in the army together in World War II, both Japanese translators in World War II, and he came from a different outfit originally and so came to this outfit that I was in a little later, but we got together because we were thinking of putting on a musical with our friends. It never materialized because the war came to an end and we all went various places.

Crawford: A musical?

Imbrie: Yes, I had helped put on a little musical before Commanday arrived, with some friends. We put on shows together; there were both men and women in the outfit, and we were stationed in Arlington, Virginia, and we had men and women taking various parts and we put on a kind of a review, taking off on our life as soldiers and sort of making fun of things.

I wrote the tunes for these shows. We didn't have an orchestra, I just played the tunes on the piano, and I taught the kids how to sing the tunes because they didn't read music, so I'd had this experience.

Meanwhile Commanday had done something a little more ambitious. He'd been stationed in Michigan before he came to Arlington, Virginia, and he and his colleagues put on shows there--only they had orchestras and everything. It was much more ambitious than what we did.

And so we had the idea that when he came that we would put on a much fancier show. I wrote some of the tunes for it and we were working it up, but at that point the war came to an end and some of us were shipped out here and some of us were shipped out there so it never materialized.

But when I came to Cal, there was an opening for the Glee Club director for someone who was not a member of the music department. The music department had a university chorus, but there was also a student organization called the Glee Club and Treble Clef, men's and women's choruses, and their conductor was given a job at Princeton and so they were looking for a conductor. I suggested Bob Commanday, and he came out for an interview. I'd heard him conduct choruses and I knew he was good. He had been conducting a chorus in upstate New York before that.

So he came and got the job. And he actually conducted my first opera which was done here at Berkeley. [*Three Against Christmas* 1960.]

The reason he got the job at the *Chronicle* was that Frankenstein was doing both art and music criticism and he was getting a little snowed, and he decided that he would turn over the music criticism to Bob. The job of being a choral conductor was fine but there was no real chance of advancement within the administration of the university since he was not a member of the music department. What he wanted to do was conduct and do music and so if he couldn't conduct, at least he could do music reviews. So he did that and was always very interested in what was going on as a practicing musician.

He was not only a conductor, he was a flutist, and he plays cello, too, so he knows what it is to put on a concert. He's a professional musician as opposed to some critics who are not. They're just kind of intellectuals, and sometimes they're not in tune with what new music is all about. What I liked about him was that he would write articles on the state of music in the San Francisco area, for example, or music in the schools. He'd write Sunday pieces getting people interested in the musical culture of the community. So he carried on the tradition of Frankenstein, it seemed to me, as a critic--not just going to the concerts given by famous singers from the Metropolitan Opera or famous conductors from New York. He would encourage local talent. He would be very thoughtful, it seems to me, in the way he reviewed things.

San Francisco Symphony and New Music: Monteux, Jorda, Krips, and de Waart

Crawford: Was it the case that the Symphony didn't do its share of commissioning and performing new music?

Imbrie: Yes, I think that was true.

Crawford: They supported you and your music, quite a bit, it seems to me.

Imbrie: Well, they did. It depends on who the conductor was. They did start a program of composers in residence, a little later--back, I think, in the sixties, maybe, or seventies. They had a composers-in-residence program in which a composer would stay here. I know John Adams had this job for a while, and before that there was George Perle, a composer from New York who stayed here. That was probably a good program but it's no longer going on.

Crawford: Is the Maverick Series something comparable?

Imbrie: Yes, well, they don't have somebody here for three years the way they did then, working with the orchestra and all that sort of thing.

Crawford: Did [Enrique] Jorda [1954-1963] perform new music a fair amount?

Imbrie: Yes, he was very interested in doing local music. And Frankenstein arranged a meeting between Jorda and some of the composers in our area, including myself and several other

people. There was a meeting in the St. Francis Hotel in which we were all invited to meet Jorda. He wanted to hear the composers of the area and he got interested in what we were doing and he performed our music, which was wonderful.

Jorda was not very popular with the public, and the orchestra didn't like him very much because they didn't think his rehearsal technique was very good, unfortunately. But the composers certainly benefited by his presence and the idea of the San Francisco Symphony performing works by local composers was promoted.

Crawford: What about Monteux [1936-1952]?

Imbrie: Well, Monteux did the premiere of Roger Sessions' Second Symphony, which as I mentioned I think is a masterpiece. And also I understand Sessions persuaded him to read through a piece of mine that I had written [*Ballad for Orchestra,* 1947]. I wasn't here, I was in Rome at the time, but he actually read through it, though he never performed it. It was performed later, as I said, I think by Jorda. Krips [1963-1972] was very good about new music--he did my music quite a bit. I was very appreciative of that because I had an enormous admiration for him. When I was in Europe I heard him conduct all the Mozart operas in Italy.

He had just gotten out of Austria at that time after the war and that was the first thing he did with his opera company --they'd been rehearsing Mozart for all this time. They hadn't been able to travel until the war was over, and he did all the Mozart operas in German even though most of them were written in Italian. He performed them in Italy and despite the fact that they were in German the Italians thought that he was wonderful. [laughter] I was overwhelmed with the refinement of the performances because they just polished them completely.

Crawford: All German singers?

Imbrie: Yes, they were all Austrian singers, because he'd been stuck in Vienna this whole time. They did the Mozart operas and because they couldn't go on tour, they just did these operas and refined the performance of them enormously. And then he performed them in Italy.

This is long before he came to San Francisco, and when I heard that he was coming to San Francisco I was delighted because I was so impressed by the way he'd done these operas. He was as much an opera conductor as a symphony conductor.

When he came to San Francisco, I discovered that he was really interested in what was going on. He wanted to do new works and he would really study my music very carefully. He would analyze it and he would ask my opinion all the time: "Is this the way you do it?" I couldn't believe that a man like this--he was much older than I--would treat me and any composer like this!

To him, you see, it was that if you're going to do it all, you have to assume this composer is as good as Beethoven or you don't do it. And I couldn't imagine being treated like that by a European, experienced conductor of that sort. And so it was a wonderful experience for me to have him do that.

Other conductors have done very well too. I know that some of them don't want to ask your opinion, they'll just say, "If you have any problems, if you have any suggestions, just write them down, I'll look at them before the next rehearsal." I would do that and very often the results would be very good because they'd be quick learners, they would understand what you meant right away.

Krips was very methodical. He wasn't a fast learner. He'd get up at five in the morning in order to study the score. He just was very thorough whereas some of the other conductors weren't--I liked him a lot. He was a wonderful man.

Crawford: I know some of the musicians thought he was difficult.

Imbrie: He was very demanding of the orchestra. And also he had the appearance of a German sergeant--he had a stiff neck and his whole body would move back and forth. He couldn't turn his head very well. There was something actually physically wrong with it, so he gave the impression of being a martinet. But actually, underneath all that, he was very humble and had a tremendous respect for the music that he conducted.

He was very old-fashioned. There were certain kinds of things that he couldn't do easily--certain kinds of rhythmic problems that wouldn't come up in classical music, certain relations between rhythmic entities. I know there's one place in my First Symphony where I had something going in fast sixteenth notes in 4/4 time and then I took the same sixteenths and did them in groups of three. I changed the tempo so that it would be in an exact ratio, [articulates fast rhythm] so the beat was a little faster but the sixteenth notes were the same. He couldn't do that. He just went slower, he wanted the beat to remain the same. He couldn't make this little equation

because that sort of thing doesn't happen in the music he was accustomed to.

Crawford: Even so, he was willing to perform it and was always open to it?

Imbrie: He was very open to it. And he was a very profound musician, I must say. I admired him a lot.

Crawford: Ozawa [1970-1976] was interested in your music?

Imbrie: No. No, Ozawa never did any of my music. It wasn't his cup of tea, apparently. Krips was, I think, the one who was most interested. Jorda, Krips, and Edo de Waart.

The Recording Industry and New Music

Crawford: Robert Commanday wrote about how unfair the recording industry was to contemporary composers, and he listed some figures: Sessions at that point--this was in 1969--had eight recordings, Carter had sixteen, you had five, Boulez had three, and Stockhausen had nine!

Imbrie: Yes, I think those numbers would be very different now. Obviously today this is no longer the case because there are many, many labels. CDs are put out on so many different labels and almost everybody has their music recorded.

Crawford: It's easier today, isn't it?

Imbrie: It's easier. The only trouble is distribution. In other words, you're not going to find what you want in every record store. You're going to have to look it up in a catalogue and order it, whereas in those days you should expect to walk into a record store and whatever there was available would be in that record store.

Nowadays you have to go and order it specially. If you want something, you have to look it up as you would in a bookstore, and you can always order it from the publisher. But there are some record labels that have better distribution than others and so that's where the problem really lies.

Crawford: You have talked about the gap between the composer and the public. I'm thinking about some remarks that you made to the Music Teachers National Association.

Imbrie: Oh, this was back in the fifties, wasn't it?

Crawford: It was in the fifties. You were talking about the gap between the public and composers and you said, "Blame it on capitalism or Wagner." Would you elaborate a little bit on that?

Imbrie: Well, I don't know about Wagner. I'm not sure what I meant by that, but I know the capitalism thing was simply the fact that people are in the business to make money, that's all. People in the recording business and the publishing business are in there to make money. And so there's a temptation if you want your music distributed, you write down to your public and write things that will be popular.

A composer like Gershwin, for example, I admire enormously --I keep remembering that Gershwin and Schoenberg used to play tennis together in Los Angeles. [laughter] But the point is that some people have a natural gift for writing music that is of a popular nature and I don't mind that at all. If you have a talent like Gershwin, you should do that sort of thing. I think he's enriched our culture enormously.

But there are other people like Schoenberg who do not approach a public in that way and yet who are extremely important for understanding what music can become and how it can work. Every generation reassesses these people like Schoenberg and you have to come to terms with what he represents even if the stuff is not popular, will never sell a million records. This has to do with the relation between the composer and the public you are writing your music for--I don't think you write it entirely for yourself because that becomes a sort of a self-admiration society. You have to make a gesture that will make contact with somebody else.

And so I keep telling my students that if in ten years somebody else listening to their music for the first time can't make sense of it, what's wrong? You've got to project. And I think a composer has to project, but you have to assume that your listener will meet you half-way. You'll meet him half-way, he'll meet you half-way.

More About First and Second String Quartets; "Stealing from Bartok"

Imbrie: A composer has a responsibility towards the listener but the listener has a responsibility toward the composer. They have

to meet one another. You have to assume that there's some common ground, some bond between you and your listener, that some of your memories and some of your cultural background is the same.

I couldn't write a piece that would be understood by a native of central New Guinea who'd never heard a symphony in his life. On the other hand, I would imagine that if such a person had had a chance to listen to enough Western music, then I ought to be able to communicate with him. That's why I hate the word "musics."

Crawford: You referred to "musics" when you were talking about the academic quality of East Coast music, that it's so theoretical.

Imbrie: There's a danger of that, but the best of that music communicates in spite of itself. There's something there which appeals if you open your ears to it and listen to it without expecting it to do something you want it do to. Just listening--you try to put yourself in a position of being open.

So I think that that's what we all have to do. We're living in a world now where cultures are getting closer together and we have to know more about the way other people think in other parts of the world. The more we learn about each other, the better off we are, and the richer our experience will be. We all have an obligation to open ourselves to experiences of this sort.

And then we have to be critical and we have to reject what we can't use. We have to do the best we can to make sure that what we're doing satisfies us. In other words, I won't let a piece of music off of my desk until I've absolutely decided that it works. If there's something that doesn't seem to quite work, I won't let it go until I've clarified it. And when I say clarified it, I mean I'm thinking of myself as a listener, and I assume that if I can clarify it to myself, there's a chance I can clarify it for somebody else, but otherwise there's no chance.

Crawford: When Frankenstein writes that he simply has to hear a work more than once, that's rational, isn't it--is that what you call going half-way?

Imbrie: Yes, well, I think he's just being very kind.

Crawford: Referring to the Second Quartet.

Imbrie: Yes, that's right. The second one was the one that had some novel effects in it, but that he might have found attractive. The first one was a student work but I still think it works. Actually it had a lot of influences in it which I later found out about. For instance there was one place which I really stole from Bartok without knowing it. I'd heard a Bartok quartet and I'd returned the record to the library, and when I got around to writing my own piece, I wrote a passage which later on when I heard the Bartok quartet--it was an early one--I suddenly realized where I'd gotten it. It had become unconscious; I hadn't realized that that's where it came from. But the context was very different.

Crawford: We will get into that in our next session when we talk about the direction of your work. Is there anything more to say about Composer's Forum?

Imbrie: There was a Composer's Forum retrospective concert given under the auspices of the San Francisco Symphony at Old First in '83. They played a work of Roger Sessions, and among the composers represented on those concerts were Leland Smith, who was at Stanford, Roger Nixon, Ed Cone, who was at Princeton and a student of Sessions' from way back, Jerome Rosen and myself, Jack Holloway, who was an interesting composer--he died quite young--and William Smith--I already mentioned him to you.

Leonard Rosenman, who later went to Hollywood and became a Hollywood film writer, was a very interesting composer, and Earl Kim and Leon Kirchner. All these people had works performed at a Composer's Forum retrospective concert supported by or put on by the San Francisco Symphony, and so it was a kind of a recognition of the past. The organization was no longer functioning, but apparently they revived all these pieces or all these composers were represented on this concert.

Funding New Music and More About Commissions

Crawford: It must have been very special. Are any of the current performing groups similar?

Imbrie: They're very much like that. The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players are a very much bigger organization. They have a lot of financial support from backers and donors. We were always looking for donors, always visiting offices of people in San Francisco trying to get them to contribute.

Crawford: You as the composers would go out?

Imbrie: Once in a while we would go to their offices and they would be very nice to us but they would usually sort of pat us on the head and send us on our way, you know. But apparently the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players does have a lot of backing from various corporations and various groups.

Crawford: Was there much corporate giving or foundation giving?

Imbrie: Not so much. Some of the foundations used to give and don't give any more. For instance, the Ford Foundation used to commission composers but doesn't do it anymore, and a lot of the foundations have become more interested in helping with social problems of various kinds. They feel that the arts are not necessarily on top of their agenda.

Crawford: Perhaps because of the NEA--

Imbrie: Yes, the NEA has been very controversial. As you know, the Republicans are always threatening to get rid of the NEA.

Crawford: Has the Endowment helped you?

Imbrie: I have never had any luck with them at all, but some others have. I know that Richard Felciano served on one of their committees for a while, for example, and Olly Wilson, I think, is involved with it, too. But the whole question of giving has changed a lot.

But then, groups like Earplay have to pass the hat. They send letters around asking for contributions every so often, and Composers Incorporated is a group that more or less specializes in local works and then they put on a competition for composers. Of course, both these organizations apply for, and do receive, grants from foundations. They also receive benefits from the San Francisco hotel tax.

So all these groups are very much like the Composer's Forum. I think we were just the first at the time. But I think these other groups are very exciting, and I don't want to say Composer's Forum was better than they are.

Crawford: Just a different time?

Imbrie: We were the first group of this kind in the area unless there was something before World War II. There might have been a similar organization then that I never knew about.

Crawford: I like the idea of the informality of playing in private houses to raise commissioning money. I remember Milton Salkind talking about that.

Imbrie: Well, they commissioned me one time.

Crawford: Yes, I know they did--a four-hand piece?

Imbrie: Yes, the piece for four hands with orchestra [*Little Concerto*, 1956]. They would give concerts and raise money, and it was a very modest amount of money, but even in those days it seemed like a lot, and they did that, I think, for other composers, too.

The whole idea of having performers commission composers was good. There was a cellist in the area, Robert Sayre, who commissioned me to write a piece, and whenever a performer would do that, I wouldn't expect a huge amount of money. I was just so pleased that they were interested that I would do it.

This sort of thing still goes on. I've just written a piece for Janet Packer, a violinist in Boston who has commissioned me to write a piece for her for violin solo without accompaniment, and she's going to play it on her next season when she goes on tour. She's not a famous violinist but she's a very, very good one. She insisted on a piece without accompaniment, and I've never done that before and I was a little reluctant, but when I got into it I was quite interested in the problem. Of course, Sessions wrote a very big piece for violin solo, an enormous piece which was recorded some time ago. So performers still do commission works, and performing organizations, too. Of course, there are groups like the Koussevitsky Foundation--I'm on their board, now. I've been on their board for some time.

Crawford: Yes, they commissioned your Violin Concerto, didn't they?

Imbrie: Originally they commissioned the Violin Concerto [1954]. But in those days they would commission works and then there was no concern about how the piece would ever get performed. I think I've told the story about how my piece was sitting on my desk for four years before an opportunity came to get it performed.

But what I was really getting at was that the Koussevitsky Foundation finally changed its policy about ten or fifteen years ago and I was on the board at the time. I think it was a very important change, and that is, a composer has to apply through a performing group.

The Koussevitsky Foundation now expects a performing group or a chamber ensemble or an orchestra to make the application on behalf of the composer. The composer will then write the piece for that group and they will premiere it, and therefore you don't get into this problem of having a commission and the piece completed and nobody plays it. That's the way it used to be. If the commissioning group is an orchestra, they expect the orchestra to pay some of the expenses involved.

Crawford: That's a little bit more difficult for the composer, then?

Imbrie: Well, the composer has to get together with a performing group that will be interested in what he will do.

Crawford: Do you think that's fair?

Imbrie: I think it's fair. Now again, if I were a young composer, I don't know how much luck I would have getting the San Francisco Symphony to apply to a foundation on my behalf, so in that sense it may not be fair, but on the other hand, I wanted to write a violin concerto and I just wrote it, and I had no idea who was ever going to play it, it was only by luck that the San Francisco Symphony played it because the university paid for the concert. It was the opening of the new music building and there was a series of concerts and so they hired the San Francisco Symphony to play the pieces that they told them to play. And only after that did they decide that they would play it on one of their regular concerts. But that was pure luck on my part.

I'm trying to see if there's anything else I should mention. There was a Milhaud birthday concert in '53, and a farewell concert for Roger Sessions. I have mentioned Frank DeBellis?

Crawford: Yes, was he interested primarily in Italian music?

Imbrie: Yes, at least as regards financing. He gave us a lot of help with the musician's union, Local 6--that was in May of '56 when we did Italian and United States works--especially Dallapiccola's. We had some small gifts from various sources like the Ditson Fund, but that was just a tiny amount of money.

Crawford: Did tickets cover much of your expenses?

Imbrie: I don't remember the proportions but we always had a deficit at the end of the year. I remember sometimes we would raffle off a case of whiskey or something in order to--[laughter] I don't like to repeat myself, but we did a performance of *Pierrot*

Lunaire and there was a Frankenstein review in which he talked about the fact that it was in English. It was done in English and he discussed the whole question of *sprechstimme* and what the effect of it is in English, and all that. It was kind of interesting.

Crawford: Could you talk a little bit more about the Forum workshops?

Imbrie: Well, it's just that we would get together--there were little postcards that they'd send out saying that these pieces are going to be done and at such and such a place, and it's all informal and everybody showed up and discussed them and they'd perform them. It was very useful, especially for students, to have their pieces performed--that job is now done by the noon concerts to some extent because every semester there's one noon concert given over to student compositions where everybody gets to hear them. The noon concerts were started by Joe Kerman.

Before that time, the Composer's Forum, to some extent, fulfilled that function of giving people a chance to have their music listened to. And sometimes some performer would want to put on a piece by a well-known composer or by an older composer--you could see some of those postcards if you look at the archives. You can also see the financial reports and the kinds of problems they had with those.

Crawford: I can imagine.

Imbrie: And committees on the constitution and how things should be organized.

Two Years as a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome, 1947-1949

Crawford: You went to the American Academy in Rome in '47, after you finished your master's. Who recommended you--I understand the program had been closed down during the war.

Imbrie: Right. I think Roger Sessions must have recommended me, I don't know. But I was invited.

The other person was Alexei Haieff--I don't know whether you know that name--he was sort of a Stravinsky disciple in a way. He was a Russian who came here before the war. I think he came in from Manchuria to this country, from Russia, and he lived in New York.

He and I were the first two composers to go to the Academy after the war. That was in 1947, so when we got to Italy things were still in pretty bad shape. You could see sunken ships in Naples' harbor, and you could see buildings that were all destroyed by shrapnel, and the whole place--a lot of it looked very much wrecked by World War II. Not much repair had been done yet.

Crawford: Where did you live?

Imbrie: We lived at the American Academy. Do you know the American Academy in Rome? Have you ever been there?

Crawford: I know where it is.

Imbrie: It's up on the Janiculum, on top of the hill, a building that was built at the turn of the century by a famous New York architectural firm, McKim, Mead & White--they built a lot of skyscrapers in New York. It had studios and living quarters, and before the war it was for bachelors only. They allowed married couples, but if you were a married couple it was very inconvenient because there were just so many bathrooms on each floor--and you had the problem of where you hang your laundry and all that kind of thing. The first time I was not yet married so--[laughter]

In the old days people used to go for a three-year period, like Roger Sessions when he was there, or Samuel Barber. I think we were there for two years and now it's one, I believe.

At first there was not much hot water--because there was a lot of difficulty with the ordinary things of life. There wasn't enough heat in the wintertime so you had to put on several layers of sweaters. I finally asked to have a studio in the basement, and people thought I was crazy, but it was nice and warm down there, it was near the furnace. And I didn't need a great big studio the way some of the sculptors or the painters did.

Crawford: Who were your friends at the Academy?

Imbrie: Well, there was Alexei Haieff and there were several artists and there was a sculptor that I got along pretty well with. There were painters, sculptors, architects, art historians--those were the kinds of people who got fellowships at the American Academy. [Mr. Imbrie provided this list: "In music: Jack Beeson, '50; Yehudi Wyner, '56; Robert Moevs, '55; Frank Wigglesworth, '54. In painting: Alan Gussow, '55; Philip Guston, '49; Arthur Osver, '54. Some sculptors were: Albert

Wein, '49; Classics, Charles & Mary Babcock, '55, Doris Taylor Bishop, '49.]

We were also encouraged to go and meet our colleagues in Rome--Italian composers. The head of the Academy, Laurance Roberts, was a very nice man. He's still alive, although he's quite old now. He was actually an art historian and knew a lot about Japanese art, among other things, but he took it very much as his responsibility to make sure that you met people in your own field in Rome.

So he invited us to meet people who he knew about, and he would have us for dinner and we would meet local Italian composers or musicians. For instance he had us meet Paul Hindemith one time when he happened to be in Rome and he invited us all to dinner, so he made a big effort to acclimatize us and get us into the Italian scene, and I thought it was a very nice thing for him to do. He was a wonderful guy and his wife was very nice, too. They're both still living and are in Baltimore, and so I still communicate with them occasionally.

Crawford: That represented a great honor for a young composer.

Imbrie: Yes, at that time. It hadn't been organized yet and as I say we were simply invited to come. Ever since then you've had to apply, and once or twice I've been on their panel to look at the applications. I haven't been on it very often but I have once or twice, and it's all very formalized, but in those days they were just looking for somebody to come because they wanted to open up again. I guess they just asked for recommendations, so it was very nice, I didn't have to go through the application process.

We would spend the winter working--I would just compose, and one good thing about the Academy at that time was that there was a relationship between the Academy and the local radio station. And they would try to put on performances of works by the composers on the local radio.

Crawford: Yes, that was a charming story you told.

Imbrie: I had been introduced to the conductor at the station by Roberts and I had given him my score, and I didn't hear from him. I told you the story about how I finally got the piece performed just by going to the radio station and talking to the right person. Since that time, I believe they have had a formal arrangement with the radio station to perform so many

works by the American students or the American composers there each year.

Crawford: Do you remember the conductor?

Imbrie: Oh, Fernando Previtali. It was the Rome Radio Orchestra, RAI--a permanent orchestra and chorus. They broadcast from a well-designed studio at the radio station--constructed, I believe, during the Mussolini era.

Crawford: How did that get started--that fellowship?

Imbrie: Oh, it goes back to 1894. It has congressional recognition from 1905 of some kind, and it was raised by private funds. It's an imitation of the French Prix de Rome, and many governments had set up a Prix de Rome that's sort of like the French Prix because they didn't want to be outdone by the French. There's an English one and there's a German one and so forth; I forget how many nationalities are involved. But we had our congressional charter, so it does have some governmental connection and is all supported by private funding.

Crawford: Remarkable that it has carried on.

Imbrie: Yes, and part of that was building this building. Well, the French Academy is really very magnificent. They have a big castle on top of another hill where they hold forth. That's been going since early in the nineteenth century, and people like Berlioz and Debussy received the French Prix de Rome.

We had some contact with the young composers in these other programs--we met some of the current French composers and others.

Crawford: Do you remember any of them?

Imbrie: Yes, although I've never heard about them professionally since. I think the opinion was that the people who won the French Prix de Rome were usually very academic so then they were very sort of proper. They weren't the revolutionary types at all. That's what people told me. There were some very nice people that I met, but I haven't heard of them professionally since.

Crawford: Was your studio in the Academy as well?

Imbrie: Yes, the work space and the living space were in the main building. Then there is another place called the Villa Aurelia

where they put on concerts and where they have various events, and there are some apartments there.

I came back to Rome later--I was there on a Guggenheim--and if they have space, they'll put you up if you've been a fellow of the Academy and you want to stay there. I was able to stay there one other time.

Another time I was a composer-in-residence and there were two younger composers who were there as fellows. One of the composers-in-residence that I had when I was there as a student was Samuel Barber and another one was of Russian origin.

Crawford: What was the relationship?

Imbrie: They were supposed to be there in an advisory capacity if you wanted to discuss something--it was a way of making contact with somebody in the older generation in your field.

Crawford: What kind of relationship did you have with Samuel Barber?

Imbrie: He was very friendly. His music is very different from mine--but he would make a suggestion every now and then. He was fairly encouraging. He wasn't a great teacher like Roger; he'd never actually taught. He wasn't interested in teaching as such, but he made some comments that were of some value.

Crawford: He would listen to your work?

Imbrie: Yes, he would listen to you. I found him a very urbane and pleasant sort of person. I didn't feel very close to him in any way, but he was perfectly nice.

Crawford: What was your personal regimen?

Imbrie: I'd get up and compose all day long. That was the whole thing! And if you didn't want to compose you could go look at the city. You could go visit all the cathedrals and the parks and you could meet with people who you had been introduced to. I found the Italians were very cordial and they were very pleased that you were attempting to speak Italian. It's not like the Parisians who are tired of Americans practicing their French; the Italians seemed very pleased that you were even attempting to speak their language, and so I found it a very pleasant experience.

But you could use the time any way you wanted to. You could go on tours--you could to go to Florence. I once went to Florence and spent several weeks there, just going to a music

festival and sightseeing. Or I'd travel all over the country, and in the summertime I'd go off to France and England and Germany.

Crawford: You had a stipend that allowed for traveling?

Imbrie: Yes, you had a stipend. I was on the G.I. Bill of Rights, too. I had been in the army and that money came through rather late because of all the bureaucracy involved and because I was not in the States. I was in Europe and I wasn't at a regular university but this did qualify for the G.I. Bill.

I was in Paris the first summer--I had a cousin who lived there and I was visiting him--and I met somebody from the American Academy who said, "By the way, there's a big check for you at the Academy. It's the G.I. Bill. Your check has come."

So I wrote to the Academy and they sent me all this money which had been accumulating since I left. It was all the money they'd owed me from the beginning, so I spent it all eating at fancy restaurants with my cousin! [laughter]

But it was very nice--the idea that you could spend your time composing, going to concerts, touring Europe, getting to know the lay of land--that's what it was all about, so that you could absorb a little bit of the European background and see what everything was like.

Crawford: It's a wonderful idea. Were you expected to complete a work?

Imbrie: No, previously it was that way, the way they do it in France. Previously you were expected to complete a work, but at this time you were on your own. A lot of people nowadays, I'm afraid, are so anxious about their careers that they always want to go back to New York to make the scene.

Crawford: From Rome?

Imbrie: From Rome, and so they're always looking for excuses to go back to New York for some concert or some event that they want to be part of. I didn't have that feeling at all. I was maybe foolish but I was just delighted to be able to write music, and get it performed there.

But it was good to be able to be on your own and not to have any pressure put on you for a couple of years. You just developed your compositional skills, a very important thing if you can do it. Not many people can do that. Most people have to go get a job right away and make their living. To be able

to spend two years just maturing your style and getting to know things and not feeling under any pressure--it was wonderful.

Then I came back and started teaching at Berkeley. Fortunately for me, I didn't have to worry because I had already been offered the job at Berkeley, you see, in '47. In those days it was not as competitive as it is. There weren't that many composers around in '47 in this country. Nowadays every job has three hundred applicants for it, but in those days, I was offered the job at Berkeley as soon as I got my master's degree. They were looking for somebody to teach and there was no question of sending out an application--it was just done informally.

Crawford: Is that a better system?

Imbrie: Well, it was not fair. I'm sure there were lots of very good people there who weren't lucky.

Crawford: I think that's rather loyal, though, to look at home first.

Imbrie: Well, I think so. But on the other hand, it's fairer to have open competition. One wouldn't dream of doing it that way nowadays; it wouldn't be right. But in those days there weren't that many composers around, the problem had not reared its ugly head. People didn't worry about these things. So I just say that I was lucky to have been there at that particular time.

Crawford: You were happy with your years in Rome?

Imbrie: Oh, yes!

Crawford: I think you wrote *On the Beach at Night* there?

Imbrie: Yes, that was one of the pieces I wrote there. And I also wrote a piece called *Divertimento* which was done by a local chamber ensemble. As a matter of fact, Alexei Haieff had written a piece for a certain combination and they were going to play it so I said, "I'll write another piece for that same combination so they'll have two pieces to play." And so we did it. It was that sort of thing, so I wrote *Divertimento.* I also wrote the songs just mentioned, *On the Beach at Night*, and a piano sonata.

Crawford: What about your travels?

Imbrie: I went to Scotland because I wanted to see what that was like. My parents had had a woman who worked for them who was Scottish

and who retired and went back there and I went and visited her and got a feeling for what the countryside was like.

We went back to Scotland later--my family and I--because my wife is a Scottish dance enthusiast. She's not Scottish by descent as I am, but she's very talented in Scottish dance, and so is my son--they do a lot of Scottish dancing for exercising, for entertainment, and they went to St. Andrew's one summer maybe ten or fifteen years ago--to go to a Scottish dance workshop.

I came along and learned how to drive on the left-hand side of the road, and we went and toured a little bit around Scotland. I went to see some of the areas where my ancestors came from, but the only specific thing about my ancestors that I could tell you is that I had one ancestor who was an architect who built a church in Crathie, which is near Balmoral where the British royal family spend their summer. Queen Victoria knocked down my ancestor's church in order to build, in its place, her own Victorian monstrosity. The original cornerstone of my ancestor's church still exists, with his name on it, and the date of that building.

But then I found that the minister of the church had the cornerstone out in his garden. He used it as a table in the garden. It was on four wooden legs as a little table but the inscription was underneath so it wouldn't get washed away by the rain. So I got down on my hands and knees and I took my camera and I took a picture of it. It's underneath, you know--the inscription with my ancestor's name carved on it. [laughter]

His name was Clerk, Andrew Clerk, and it was built in the year 1804 or 1803, something like that, and I have photographs of that. When my younger son died we had a similar inscription in the same kind of calligraphy on his gravestone up here. It's nice to have some ancestral contact of that sort, but that's the only specific thing about my ancestors that I did when I was in Scotland.

Crawford: Who was Andrew Clerk?

Imbrie: Well, that would be my father's great-grandfather on his mother's side. My father's mother's maiden name was Clerk and that would have been her grandfather.

I was also able to travel to an ISCM festival in Amsterdam at one time, and I stayed with some Dutch people who were very

nice and went to all the concerts. They were asking me what I thought of the music that was going on and so on.

Crawford: You said you thought Europe was quite exhausted musically after the war.

Imbrie: Well, yes. This was before the big fifties business with Boulez and Stockhausen and all that crowd, and they were still kind of shell-shocked and I didn't feel that there was anything all that exciting going on at that time.

IV TEACHING AT UC BERKELEY: 1949-1991

Loyalty Oath Issues, 1949-1951

Crawford: Let's come home to Berkeley and talk in a general way about what you found in the department and how it developed. You mentioned the rivalry between musicology and composition.

Imbrie: Yes. Well, I think it was much more of a dichotomy, at first, because Sessions and Bukofzer were the two famous people in the department. Sessions was a composer and Bukofzer a musicologist and there was not much love lost between them. But I think that after some time things improved, that many students who had had the opportunity to study with both, or with people of their kind, got together a lot better in later years.

Crawford: You were on the faculty in 1949 when the loyalty oath was voted in. What was the feeling about it?

Imbrie: There was a very strong objection to it. I don't think I need to go into explaining what the loyalty oath was. I assume this is common knowledge, but one was expected to sign this loyalty oath to say one had never been a Communist in order to get a job at the university. This was during the pre-McCarthy era in the early fifties when people were really incensed about these issues.

Under Albert Elkus' leadership and on our own account we all were opposed to it, but we were forced to sign in order to keep our jobs, and some of us just didn't feel that we could make a dramatic gesture by resigning from the university as a result and so we were all forced to sign.

There were a few well-known professors at Berkeley in the sciences, particularly, who resigned as a result of the loyalty oath, and there were others who were not so famous who also

resigned on matters of principle. There were maybe half a dozen such people at the university and many of us agreed to donate 10 percent of our monthly salaries to support these people until they found other jobs.

Crawford: Was the entire university involved?

Imbrie: It was universitywide. At least, as far as I know. I suppose the rest of the other campuses were involved, too, but I know it was true of the Berkeley campus. I was one of those who contributed 10 percent of my monthly salary, which was not a very princely amount in those days, in order to help support those people who had resigned on principle.

Crawford: Was that a known thing?

Imbrie: Oh, yes, it was made public and people were asked to belong to this program.

Crawford: What was the position of the students? Were the music students very involved in that?

Imbrie: Well, I'm sure that they were mostly on our side. [laughter] I don't remember that part of it. It all stopped after a few years, and there's a book about the loyalty oath controversy which tells the whole history of it.[1]

Crawford: Were there professors from the department who resigned?

Imbrie: Not as far as I can recall, although I know there was a temptation to do so. I remember I had a pipe dream once about resigning and then re-enlisting in the armed forces in order to show that I was patriotic, but I didn't. [laughter]

Remembering Albert Elkus, Joaquin Nin-Culmell, Manfred Bukofzer

Crawford: What do you remember about Mr. Elkus during that time?

Imbrie: I remember him as a very paternal sort of figure. He had a slight speech impediment; he would hem and haw a little bit and

---

[1]The Year of the Oath: The Fight for Academic Freedom at the University of California. George R. Stewart in collaboration with other professors of the University of California, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, NY, 1950.

people would imitate him in a very kindly way. But he gave a Beethoven course which as you say was very, very popular with the students.

Having been chairman for so many years I think he thought of himself as an administrator as much as he did as a musician. I think he was an excellent administrator and an excellent musician at the same time. It was only after his tour of duty or term of office that the rules were changed so that a person could only be chairman for a brief period of time and then would step down and somebody else became chairman. Although Elkus was an excellent chairman, I still think it was better for everybody to take this job on only temporarily because it does interfere with your research or creative work, whatever it is.

Crawford: It's a three-year limit now, isn't it?

Imbrie: Yes, and one can be chairman again after having been off for a while.

Crawford: What are the attributes of a good chairman?

Imbrie: Well, somebody who's willing to sacrifice his time for it and somebody who is an able administrator and who can get things organized and who is willing to spend a lot of time on budgets and on administrative correspondence and scheduling department meetings and all that kind of thing. I can only say that I'm thankful that I never had the job!

Crawford: You said that.

Imbrie: I would have made a terrible chairman. But the ones that were chairmen were I think on the whole excellent. I don't want to say that this person was better than that because I think the system is a very good one. People who were chairing the department did it in their own way, but in every case the thing was democratic and we took votes and people argued this and that and finally a consensus was reached. The department chair would carry out the wishes of the department and that's the way things should be. I think it's an excellent system.

Crawford: It is said that when Joaquin Nin-Culmell was brought in in 1950 there were bad feelings because he was an outsider.

Imbrie: Well, that's true. I think he came in as chairman, as I recall.

Crawford: He did, yes and was chairman until Bukofzer took over in 1954.

Imbrie: As far as I recall he did a good job. I mean, he and Bukofzer were both really Europe-oriented, although Nin-Culmell was not really European; I think his origins were Cuban rather than Spanish.

Crawford: That's right.

Imbrie: But they were more interested in European culture than they were in American culture, and Bukofzer as a musicologist was really very Europe-oriented, but I don't think that stood in the way of their being efficient chairmen at the time that they were.

Crawford: Bukofzer was chairman in 1954-55--kind of a legendary name.

Imbrie: Yes, he was of the same generation as Roger Sessions. They were hired by Elkus at about the same time. Elkus had a vision of the department being strong in both musicology and in composition and so he hired two of the best people in those two fields to come to Berkeley and he made sure that they came--he gave them what they needed in order to come.

Crawford: What might he have offered?

Imbrie: I don't know the details. Sessions had been at Princeton, but he was able to hire him away from Princeton. And Bukofzer was an emigre from Europe at the time of World War II. He was Swiss, actually, I believe, or lived in Switzerland anyway. Both of them came to Berkeley because they were given very good offers at a time when it was crucial for the future of the department.

I think they started their tenure at the university during the same period when the University of California was growing from a regional university to a worldwide university. During the fifties and sixties, the university was expanding enormously and it became one of the most important universities in the world, not only in the country, and that happened during the period when these two men first started, so this was just symptomatic of what was happening in other departments during the period.

There was a lot of money for the university, and there were a lot of new students coming in who had been in World War II and had finished their tour of duty in the military and were looking for education, and the population of California was expanding. So the period in which these two people came coincided with this period of expansion.

It was a very exciting time to be here, despite the loyalty oath, and once that loyalty oath thing was out of the way, it seemed like the best place in the world to be.

Faculty Appointments

Crawford: Were there any other so-called stars in the department?

Imbrie: Well, let me put it this way, the question of hiring a star came up as soon as Sessions resigned, and also, I suppose, when Bukofzer died. There was a question of how do you replace these people? I know at the department meetings there were discussions about "should we try to find someone to replace Sessions at the same level of fame?" And it was decided not to do so; that it was much better to hire young people who had great potential than it was to hire famous people to replace other famous people the way they do at Harvard, for example.

Crawford: Yes, and put them on tenure track.

Imbrie: Yes, put these people on tenure track rather than stealing a tenured person from some other university by offering him more money--somebody who's already famous. I think that that is one of the things that makes Berkeley to me a much better place from the point of view of the morale of the faculty because a young faculty member knows if he does his job right that he will be promoted to tenure, and then this will mean that he will grow, whereas at Harvard people are hired at the junior faculty level and then only 5 percent become full-time tenured professors.

Crawford: Yes, so it's an in-and-out situation rather than a lifetime investment.

Imbrie: Yes, right. But there have been some very distinguished people, hired at the time when they had already made a good reputation for themselves at other universities--some who were fairly young, but the major part of their career has been here. Olly Wilson has made a great name for himself as have many other members of the department.

Crawford: Is it in any way a narrow department musically?

Imbrie: We hope not. You asked me whether we would have hired someone like John Adams, and my response was he probably would not have even considered accepting because he wants to compose full time

and he's getting enormous amounts of money in commissions for works that are very well-known and are written up because he writes in a style that is very acceptable to large masses of people.

Crawford: Yes, I guess that's my question, really. I wasn't singling out John Adams, but someone who writes in the style of John Adams--minimalism--would that person have been welcomed on the faculty?

Imbrie: It's hard to say. John Adams is one of the better of these minimalist composers. I like his music better than most of the other minimalists, although it's not my cup of tea, obviously.

I think it would have been difficult for a minimalist to get a job, but it's possible. You have to take into account the preferences of the people who are already there, and during the period that I was there, there were all kinds of arguments between those who were very much more conservative in their outlook and those who were more adventuresome, but I think there has been an attempt to broaden the base.

For instance, we have an electronic studio now, which we didn't have originally, and we brought in composers who were good at doing electronic music and that was something that was very controversial at the time, so I think that you have to realize that people do want to diversify but there are certain limits beyond which you can't diversify without feeling that you've somehow compromised.

For example, there was a time when chance music was very popular--you don't hear so much about it any more, but I remember once asking somebody or thinking to myself, "Could you get a Ph.D. for writing a composition which consisted of a dot on a piece of paper?" There would be an explanation saying, "Look at this dot and play whatever comes in your mind." Would that be a Ph.D. thesis? You see? And I think that's a point where you have to say no.

Crawford: Yes, that's a good answer. Well, what have been some of the issues that have come up?

Weighing Performance against Scholarly and Creative Work; Noon Concerts

Imbrie: I've gone through some of the old department meeting records and one of the things that kept coming up during my early tenure at the university or before my tenure when I was just an instructor was the whole question--and this was one of Elkus' main interests--of whether the music department should ally itself with the San Francisco Conservatory.

He thought that maybe this should be a school of music where you could have the advantages of a university education and also have a very important performance program and that the performance aspect of it could be located at the San Francisco Conservatory. They could join forces and the funding would come from the university.

Then there was the whole question of what degrees would you offer and how it would fit in with the university's idea of what constitutes a degree--a master's or bachelor's degree. And should there be a bachelor of music degree as opposed to a B.A. degree?

But Elkus, I think, always wanted there to be much more emphasis on performance than there is. I went through all the notes that had been taken at the meetings over a period of years, and this issue kept coming back at other times. Every now and then you'd hear it surface again. Somebody would think maybe we should join up with the conservatory, but it just didn't work out. There were too many people in the department who opposed it, not only on ideological grounds but on practical grounds as to how the university would manage it and whether the conservatory would be willing to do it. It got very complicated.

Another of the big questions that kept coming up was about the whole idea of professionalism in giving performances, and over a long period of time there were all kinds of plans for having, let's say, an opera workshop at the university.

Crawford: Such as they had at Stanford?

Imbrie: Yes. That was discussed, and there were all kinds of attempts made to put on operas on a small scale and to have someone permanently in charge of such a project. And the whole idea of the role of performance in relation to our degrees? We give degrees, as you know, only in composition and musicology and not in performance because there are many people who feel that

you shouldn't get a university degree in performance. Other universities feel differently.

Crawford: How do you feel personally?

Imbrie: I have very mixed feelings about it because I've seen that there are many universities, particularly state universities in the Midwest and the South, where it works very well. You do have a good composition program, you have a musicology program, you also have a performance program. The only trouble is that if you have a performance program you are outnumbered immediately because you have professors of bassoon and professors of oboe and so forth and you have to have a professor for every instrument that you can imagine and vocal teaching and conducting, and by that time the composers and musicologists are outnumbered, so politically it's something that is resisted by people in departments like this where we try to specialize in either scholarly or creative--so-called creative--work.

And the question is, "Is being a performer as creative as being a composer, or is it as scholarly as being a musicologist?" And these questions are debatable and have been debated at long length during department meetings.

Crawford: Which school is most successful with all three departments?

Imbrie: I think places like Indiana and Michigan are particularly successful--Indiana has an opera house that is as well-equipped as the Met in New York. They have some private funding for this, although it's a state university, and they also have courses and programs in stage design, costume design--everything to put on an opera.

Crawford: I know they turn out a lot of singers.

Imbrie: Yes, and they have orchestration classes--you can study orchestration and have your assignment played by an orchestra because there are something like half a dozen student orchestras! It's a conservatory essentially, but there are composers there--and very good ones sometimes.

I've been informed, however, by an ex-student at Indiana University that it is not always easy for student composers to get their works performed by student groups. One must cultivate friendships and create obligations, for example, by performing with them oneself.

Crawford: You mentioned that you have been offered a position there.

Imbrie: I was offered a job there once and I was tempted because of the lavish things they do. For example, I could have my opera performed there again and all my students could have their music played by orchestras.

Michigan is a similar thing. I've known lots of students from there and have looked at music written by students there whose music is played by student orchestras at a professional level.

It's amazing to me that at Berkeley under Michael Senturia we were able to provide the kind of excellent performances that he gave to faculty and student compositions. He did it by pulling a rabbit out of a hat regularly every year; he was able to use the members of the Cal orchestra who are not music majors for the most part, but who can play instruments.

You know, lots of people can play instruments who are not majoring in music. He had a lot of good players and was able to perform very difficult and challenging music like late Debussy and Stravinsky and Mahler. He did many Mahler symphonies with his orchestra, and he did student works and faculty works and he was able to do it although this is not a school of music, so that I think he was one of the most valuable people we ever had in the department.

So he was one of the people who made it possible for this music department to enable its graduate students to compete on the national level for jobs because they could send tapes of orchestral works that they had recorded just the way people from Indiana or Michigan could. Not to the same extent--they had to be short works--but a student could have one short work recorded during his career as a graduate student, and Senturia was committed to helping the graduate students in composition with their careers. He did everything he could to do that with the resources at his command, and I was impressed by what he was able to do.

Crawford: Has the department traditionally been supportive of graduate students' work?

Imbrie: Oh, well, naturally every department tries to place its graduate students. One of the ways you get a reputation as a department is how many of your graduate students you place in important institutions, so it behooves us to be supportive. If we weren't we'd be dead, you know. There's no choice. [laughter]

Crawford: What about the noon concerts?

Imbrie: Those were something that Joe Kerman instituted many years ago. Noon concerts has just recently received a grant of some sort, and has some outside funding, I believe, that allows it to continue at a good level. Previous to that, concerts were given sporadically in places like Dwinelle Hall, but with the building of the new music building and the new concert hall it soon became evident that it would be possible to do them there.

It's been very valuable for student performers to have a chance to give concerts, and they're very well attended. People love to come--and then once every semester there's a noon concert given over to student composers and their works.

Crawford: Kerman I think was chairman from 1960 to 1963, and I suppose every opera lover has read his *Opera as Drama*. Would you want to say something about his contributions to the department in general?

Imbrie: I recall that he was always eminently fair, diplomatic, and highly resourceful. He found practical and imaginative solutions to administrative problems.

Musicologists vs. Composers and the Ph.D. in Composition

Crawford: I heard that he and Roger Sessions didn't get along particularly well.

Imbrie: Well, not particularly. Simply, Sessions was suspicious of musicologists in general--Bukofzer in particular, but to some extent Kerman as well. [laughter]

Again, there is a certain diversity of interests, obviously. A composer is not a scholar by temperament or by preference and a scholar is not a composer and as I say in one of these articles that I've written recently--I was thinking of Bukofzer when I said it--he says to a young composer, "Beethoven didn't need a Ph.D.; what do you need one for?" That was their attitude. Of course, the answer is Beethoven didn't have to teach in an American university.

The trouble with teaching in an American university is most universities insist on a Ph.D., or used to. Cal was much more visionary in this regard and it used to require a Ph.D. or its equivalent in training and experience, and that's what let us composers in under the circus tent because we didn't have Ph.D.s. There was no such thing at that time, but we could say

that we had the equivalent in training and experience if we showed that we had written some music and had it performed and had it reviewed.

Crawford: More than equivalent, I should say.

Imbrie: Well, from the scholarly point of view it was supposed to be equivalent. But the Germans like Bukofzer or the Europeans, in general, couldn't imagine such a situation because to them composers got their training in conservatories not in universities. European universities do not train composers. I think there is a composition program in England at Oxford, for example, and places like that, but on the whole there are no composition programs at the universities in Europe.

The whole idea of a Ph.D. in composition was another one of the issues that I was going to discuss. This is one of the issues that kept coming back in the department and was bitterly argued. And this is where the musicologists and composers really disagreed with one another for a long time. This kind of disagreement was not just in Berkeley, it was all over the country.

There were the people who had come over from Europe during World War II and had gotten jobs at American universities who were opposed to composers getting Ph.D.s. And then there were the composition people who had already taken root in the universities who were in favor of it.

Because as I say, most universities weren't thinking about music, they were just thinking about scholarship in general. Most universities require Ph.D.s in order to hire somebody and so that's where the composers got short shrift. They had to have special circumstances in order to get jobs at the university.

There was a great to-do about this and I've written about it in one of my articles, but I might as well say it here, that at Princeton the same debate was going on in the early sixties about having a Ph.D. in composition. And a member of the music department, I think it was Milton Babbitt, got up and proposed a new program in front of their academic senate; he proposed a new program in musical composition which would lead to a Ph.D. He said he hoped that the faculty would approve this and after he sat down a member of the mathematics department got up and said, "This is a very interesting idea. I never heard such a thing, but it happens that in the math department we are for the first time considering giving a Ph.D. in the history of mathematics," and he sat down and it was passed unanimously.

[laughter] When Princeton passed it, other universities began to say, "Well, if Princeton can do it, we can, too," and so there was such a thing after that.

Not only the Ph.D., there was such a thing as a D.M.A.--doctor of musical art. This was supposed to be a substitute for a Ph.D., and that's what conservatories, or let's say what some of the schools of music, gave. It was never considered seriously as a substitute for a Ph.D. by most people and so the Ph.D. is now being given everywhere in composition. But there was a tremendous debate throughout the sixties on this issue at all universities, not just Berkeley. I remember these discussions that went on and on and on.

Crawford: I understand that Leonard Ratner got the first UC Berkeley Ph.D. in music. Now that there are Ph.D.s, is a musical work better recognized these days as the equal of scholarly research?

Imbrie: Well, yes. Ph.D.s are different in different universities. At Cal, graduate students in composition are expected to take a certain number of graduate courses in scholarly pursuits and they have to do term papers for those courses, but they don't have to write a scholarly paper for their Ph.D. dissertation. They do write a composition, and then, the chief person that they work with is the head of their dissertation committee.

I've been the head of many such committees in which the student will work with me on a composition and then he will show it to the other two members of the committee, and they all have to approve it. Once that's done, he gets the Ph.D. There is a dissertation committee that asks him questions and all that sort of thing, so there's this verbal thing that goes on. But in certain other universities, composition students are expected to write a paper as well as a composition.

Crawford: Such as the dissertation on your work that I saw?

Imbrie: Yes. They might be expected to write an analytical paper of some kind. But it's not as long as a paper by a scholar, it would be much shorter than that because they also have to write a composition. In other words their thesis will be a composition but they're also required to write a paper to show that they can do scholarly kinds of things in order to teach. So different universities approach the problem in slightly different ways.

I know the University of Chicago does it that way. Their students had to write a paper--some sort of analytical paper--

and then there would be a group of professors who would ask the student questions about his paper and about his piece. And this would be open to the other graduate students and it would all be done in a sort of a public forum. I remember sitting in on some of those.

Crawford: And is that a good exercise for the students?

Imbrie: I suppose it's good. Personally, I would prefer just to make sure that he composes. He'll have a chance to prove himself as a teacher by being a teaching assistant. In fact, all graduate students are required at Berkeley to be teaching assistants at certain stages so that they can be judged on their ability to be a teacher. When you write them letters of recommendation you want to be able to say that they did very well in the teaching line as well as in the composition line.

Crawford: What is tenure based on for somebody in the composing faculty here?

Imbrie: Well, presumably it's based on having your work performed in public and being productive and also having a good record as a teacher. And also, presumably, you're doing some public service or being on committees and all that kind of thing. Berkeley is much better, I think, in this regard than places like Harvard or Princeton, with which I've had some experience.

I think only 5 percent of non-tenure faculty at Harvard make it to tenure. The rest of them are hired from elsewhere, and I think at Princeton the percentage is 11 percent as opposed to 5 percent, whereas at Berkeley I don't know what the percentage is but I would say at least half of the non-tenure people if they do their job and if they succeed in being productive and being good teachers and so forth, can expect to be promoted to tenure.

The result of that is a much better morale, as I've said. It means that the tenure-track people and assistant professors have a stake in the department and are interested in the problems of the department so that they can hope to join it, whereas at Harvard or Princeton I would think that your chances of being promoted to tenure are such that you just regard it as a stepping-stone in your career. And you're already looking for jobs--

Crawford: You're going somewhere else?

Imbrie: Yes, you're already looking for jobs elsewhere.

Crawford: So maybe the pressure of having your pieces performed is offset by knowing that there's some security.

Imbrie: Yes, well, everybody wants their pieces performed. It's a question of the quality and the productiveness in general, and it seems to me that where you have a chance of succeeding and joining the department you are already committed to the good or to the interest of the department, whereas if you're not committed to the interest of the department, you think of it as just as a place that you can put on your bio: "I taught at Harvard for so many years. [laughter] That must mean I'm pretty good and won't you hire me." That's not quite the same thing.

Crawford: No, absolutely. Is it necessary for today's aspiring professor to explore electronic music?

Imbrie: It is now. I think they're expected to do a certain amount of that. Not all of them are interested. Some are very much interested. And some do both. Some are interested in both electronic and acoustical music.

David Boyden and Ethnomusicology

Imbrie: Another big department issue was the whole question of ethnomusicology. It was interesting that David Boyden, who was one of our good chairmen [1955-1961], was very interested in ethnomusicology. He didn't know anything about it himself. He felt himself to be an outsider, and said as much, but he felt it was very important that the university expand its interests. He felt that musicology was beginning to become a little precious because professors were going over the same materials over and over again in the European and Western tradition of music and he felt that it would be a breath of fresh air to have the universities get involved in music outside the Western tradition and to take seriously the music of other parts of the world.

This is what I admired about him--that he had the foresight to see that this was something that really ought to be done. UCLA was already doing it to some extent because Mantle Hood had created a program in Balinese gamelan music.

So one of the other big departmental discussions that went on at that time was the whole question of ethnomusicology and whom they should get to teach it. There were people who felt

that it should be a non-Western person; there was the thought that maybe it ought to be a black person or an Asian or someone from another culture. As it turned out they got Bonnie Wade who is not black or not non-Western but is very much interested in the music of India and the music of Japan and so forth. And other people have been hired.

This environment has been healthy in that there's a gamelan orchestra, and students can get involved in that for credit. And there are African drumming classes and all this sort of thing so that it has become a very important part of the department.

The Griller Quartet

Imbrie: So those were the main concerns. Just to go back for a moment to Elkus' interest in performance and the conservatory--one of the focal points of all this was the Griller Quartet.

Crawford: Oh, yes, I had wanted to ask you about the Griller Quartet--didn't they come in the late 1940s?

Imbrie: Yes, they were very much in residence here at that time, and there was a question about what their relation was to the university extension, to the conservatory and to Berkeley.

They gave concerts regularly, they coached ensembles, and that was one of the main points of the discussion about professionalism in the department, the question of their academic rank. Also, if one was promoted, didn't all the others have to be promoted because they were a quartet? They weren't individuals as it were [laughter] and there's something against university policy--you can't just put four people up for tenure.

Well, they finally fell apart. There were various personal problems involved which I don't remember enough about and I wouldn't want to go into in any case but the quartet finally fell apart, and people, I remember, kept wishing that we had something like that again, but whenever it came up the issue was how complicated it had been administratively, so we never were never able or never willing, one or the other--to have a similar situation, although people were very nostalgic about it for a long time--having a quartet in residence.

Crawford: I remember Elizabeth Elkus told me that when Jonathan Elkus went to live in London for a year Myra Hess asked him, "Is your father still being Grillered?"

Imbrie: Yes. [laughter] I don't pretend to understand all of it, but I know that they were very interesting people and I remember them very well, although I have to say I heard them perform and they performed a piece of mine very badly one time and I was very upset. [laughter]

Crawford: Oh! Which of your quartets?

Imbrie: Let's see, I guess it must have been the Second or Third, but in any case, there was a party afterwards and I didn't want to talk to anybody. The cellist, Colin Hampton, was the one person who understood how I felt and he took me aside and sort of talked to me the whole evening so I didn't have to talk to anybody else.

Crawford: He realized it?

Imbrie: He realized it, yes. It wasn't their kind of music and they were doggedly going through it, hating every note, that sort of thing.

Crawford: And you could tell?

Imbrie: [laughter] Yes, I could tell.

Committee Work at UC: A Stand against Secrecy at the UC Labs

Crawford: Anything else you want to say about the university?

Imbrie: Well, I could say that one of the things that I enjoyed particularly at the university was serving on committees outside the music department because there I got to know a little bit more about the university as such. We already talked about the time I was on a committee addressing the whole question of the secrecy of the experimentation and scientific work done at the labs.

Crawford: You told me that you were perhaps the first faculty member to raise the issue of the secret work being done at the UC labs.

Imbrie: Well, I wouldn't put it that way. Actually I was put up to it by some scientists. [laughter] We were all on this committee,

an inter-campus committee on educational policy or something of the sort and some of my friends who were scientists were telling me about how they thought it was terrible that the university didn't go on record about the amount of secret work that was going on in atomic bombs and all that kind of thing. They thought the faculty ought to take a position on whether this was really an academic concern, that the university had no business doing secret work and doing destructive work of this kind.

That was the way that they felt, and in our conversations it sounded as if it would be better if I were to present this thing than have one of the scientists present it because the scientists, you see, would seem to have a vested interest in something or other, whereas if it were suggested by someone who wasn't in the sciences it might make more of an impact. So I agreed that I would be the one to present this.

As it happened, while I was presenting it, policemen were struggling, were shooting tear gas at the protesters right outside the window where this argument was going on. That's all it took, and it was unanimously passed--this motion to set up a committee to investigate what was going on at Livermore and all these secret labs that were operating.

Of course it was all whitewashed, and other committees of the same kind have been set up regularly ever since. But I think this was the first time that it had been done.

Crawford: Were there other politics within your faculty or university that you took part in?

Imbrie: Well, only in the ordinary Academic Senate, where you serve on committees and you make recommendations. I don't know whether you call that political or not.

Crawford: I meant the more controversial issues.

Imbrie: Well, that's the only one that actually made any headlines. It got written up in the papers and that sort of thing. In fact, I think there was some Los Angeles paper that mentioned my name in this regard. And all that felt very strange--getting a review in a Los Angeles paper for something that I had no relation to at all, really.

I served on various other committees and some of them were interesting. For instance, one of them was fairly pertinent to the music department, and that was the committee for the chair of Italian culture.

There were some Italians in San Francisco who had established a fund for the hiring of a professor from Italy to give talks on Italian culture every so often at Berkeley. The one field that was excluded was classics, ancient Roman things or anything of that sort, because the classics department had lots of money for that kind of lecture. They have a lectureship of their own and they invite someone every year.

But I was on that committee for two or three years, and one of the people that we invited here was composer Luigi Dallapiccola as a guest lecturer, a guest professor. Another was Franco Donatoni, a well-known twentieth-century composer.

I guess I was on that committee simply because I had lived in Italy myself for several years. As you know, I was at the American Academy in Rome between '47 and '49 and I went back to the academy when I was on a Guggenheim, and I went back to the academy as a guest and then later at '67-'68 I came back again as the composer in residence there.

Crawford: You had known Dallapiccola before?

Imbrie: I had known Dallapiccola. He was a great friend of Roger Sessions. They were very close friends, and so I met Dallapiccola through Sessions, actually. It was very nice to be able to invite him.

They invited people from different fields--sometimes music, sometimes art, sometimes literature. It's not supposed to be science; it's supposed to be humanities, essentially, as far as I can recall. So that was a very nice thing to be involved in.

Crawford: Was the DeBellis family involved in the chair?

Imbrie: I'm not sure. I wouldn't be surprised. The funding for this chair may have had a lot to do with the Bank of America--

Crawford: A.P. Giannini?

Imbrie: I think he was one of the people involved, yes.

Then I was on the Representative Assembly for a while which is a group of faculty members who travel to different campuses of the university and were involved in various decision making processes, and that was very interesting. I remember we would take trips to southern California and we'd meet with colleagues on the other campuses and discuss issues pertaining to the university as a whole from a faculty standpoint.

I was also an assistant dean in humanities one time. That doesn't mean that I did anything very administrative; what we did, actually, was have appointments with students who wanted to waive the rules, for example, students in letters and science who wanted to change their major. In most cases it was already too late to change their major and they had to get special permission. I would meet, let's say, twice a week for four hours with one student per each hour, so I'd meet eight students in a week and discuss their problems.

It was very interesting to find out how many students who, say, had been in a pre-med program and had decided they didn't want to be doctors. Often their story was that their father was a doctor and he wanted his son to be a doctor--so many of them were under pressure from their parents to achieve certain kind of careers and they would try so hard but by the time they got to their junior year they realized this just wasn't their cup of tea.

Crawford: Fair enough.

Imbrie: So we had to decide whether they were putting us on or whether they had a legitimate cause and it was very easy to sympathize with them and to give them what they wanted, but we had to be careful that we weren't being talked into something because maybe a student found it too difficult and he thought he'd have an easier chance if he got into something easier.

This wasn't the only kind of problem you'd meet, but it was a typical kind of problem. I remember constantly thinking, "My gosh, I must be a real shoo-in for these guys because they know a sucker when they see one," and I was wondering about that, but they kept records of the four or five of us at the college of letters and science who did this job, and they would keep track of how many of these proposals we accepted and how many we had turned down and it turned out that I was by no means the most lenient of all so I felt a little better. But it was very hard not to be lenient because you wanted these kids to get what they wanted--on the other hand you had to think of the university's requirements.

Crawford: Was this committee work obligatory?

Imbrie: Oh, no. They asked you if you would do it and usually you would say yes unless you had a reason. If I was working on a commission and I had a deadline and somebody asked me to be on a committee, I'd say, "I'm sorry, I just would love to do it, but I have this deadline." And so if you had a good reason for not doing it, they would accept it.

Usually I found that I enjoyed this kind of work. I enjoyed meeting people outside my own field and seeing what the university was like and what was going on, and what the larger problems of the university were as opposed to just the problems of the music department. I found it very stimulating but I think it's one thing people do less of now than they used to. They identify not so much with the university at which they teach as much as by the field. Let's say you're a history professor; you're more interested in the history scene throughout the country. You go to national meetings. If your professors have a meeting in New York at some point, the whole question of who are the talented people and who are going to be hired by whom and all of this is settled by groups of people in the field.

Crawford: Interesting perspective.

Imbrie: I think there's that tendency. That's my suspicion. I can't prove it, but I just have the feeling that nowadays there's less interest in the university as an entity and more interest in the scholarly field as an entity.

Crawford: As a composer, what do you see as the pros and cons of a university association?

Imbrie: Again, I have an article that goes into that. You haven't seen it because it's the one that's going to be published by Einaudi in Italian, eventually, if they accept it, and I haven't heard whether they accepted it. It's called "American Music In and Out of the Universities." [See appendix.]

Crawford: I think I had seen something on the subject from the fifties.

Imbrie: There's one from the fifties; I talked about that kind of issue earlier. [See appendix.]

Thoughts about Teaching Composition; A Student's Thoughts about Becoming a Composer

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about your teaching. I understand that your students thought you were such a good person they called you St. Andrew.

Imbrie: Good heavens! Nobody ever called me that that I ever heard! [laughter]

Crawford: Sandor Salgo told me that.

Imbrie: I think he made that up.

Crawford: [laughter] It probably reflects his estimation of you.

Imbrie: Well, I don't know. I've known him a long time because he was one of the performers in the first performance in my First String Quartet back in New York in the early forties. He was at the Westminster Choir School at Princeton--not Princeton University--because there was a Westminster School there. This has nothing to do with the university--but he played in the first performance of my quartet in 1943 or 1944, so I've known him for a long, long time. And he's an excellent musician.

Crawford: Something else that is of interest is the question of correcting student composers' problems. What do you perceive as problems, and do you bring your own style into the corrections?

Imbrie: Are you talking about graduate students in composition, or are you talking about beginning students in harmony and that sort of thing?

Crawford: Composition students, the more advanced students.

Imbrie: I think we all have an identity crisis at a certain period in our development as a composer. You want to know who you are because we're living in a very eclectic society where you get music from all over the world, and we have jazz, we have rock music, we have Beethoven string quartets, we have music from India and China, we have every kind of music you can imagine. So who are we?

When we start to write music, there's an awful lot of talk about style, and I like to compare this with Mozart's era in which you grew up with a certain style and that was like your native language--Mozart was already writing concertos when he was ten years old and they sound pretty good. [laughter] So at that time there was no question of style, you didn't even think about it.

Nowadays the whole question of style is something that bothers people, and I think you have to find out who you are and stop worrying about style and just do your thing. So when I look at a student's work, I don't criticize it stylistically if I can possibly help it, and this I learned from Roger Sessions--you can point out limitations that might come up as a result of the kind of style the students write in. You might

say, "If you pushed things a little further in this direction, or if you did this or that maybe it would solve the problem or help solve the problem." So you try to expand their resources as much as you can without saying, "Your style stinks, you should write like me." [laughter] That's not the way to go about it.

So you're looking at consistency: if you're going to do it this way, if you're going to write this kind of piece, then this is the problem. All of sudden there's a strange thing that happens over here and I don't understand why that happens at that point. And so you try to make the thing work as best it can within the context of the students' idiom, the way they write, but you also try to show them examples of other kinds of things that can be done. If you think they are limited, if you think that they're really afraid to try things, they're scared, then you've got to somehow encourage them to expand their horizons a little bit. You have to do it in a way that won't turn them off.

Crawford: You can't threaten them.

Imbrie: You can't threaten them or they'll think, "Oh, well, he's just one of these so and so composers," and, "I can't do that, I'm not interested"--then you just build a wall and there's no communication any more.

Crawford: So you're trying to bring their voices out?

Imbrie: Yes, you're trying to help them do what they want to do and also show them other possibilities which they might be interested in and might not. If they don't want to do it, fine, but you have to keep nudging them and keep making them responsible for everything that happens.

I remember I had a student once who was showing me his piece--this was back in the sixties or seventies and this was kind of the jargon of the era but he was saying, "And then this happens and then that happens"--that was his description of his own piece. [laughter] What I wish I had said to him and I didn't think of it at the time was, "It didn't happen; you put it there." You want them to realize that something doesn't just happen, you put it there.

Crawford: There's responsibility there.

Imbrie: Yes. [laughter]

Crawford: I liked very much the master's thesis that your student from New York University wrote. Linda Kernohan. She said in her introduction, "I didn't know I was a composer until Andrew Imbrie told me I was a composer."

Imbrie: Well, I think if you give them half a chance, a lot of people could be composers; there's nothing unusual about being a composer. I owe this point of view to my piano teacher who taught me when I was four years old, five years old, Ann Abajian, who's still alive--she's in her nineties now--and she said, "Why don't you write some pieces of your own?" I discovered later that she does that with all her piano students. She gets them to write little pieces of their own and she has them play them at their recitals.

Of course she didn't teach me any technique or anything--she might have made a suggestion or two. The same was true of Leo Ornstein, when I studied with him. He was very supportive and tried to help me but he was not the kind of perceptive teacher that Roger Sessions was. The point I'm trying to make is that a lot of people think that being a composer is sort of like being born with three legs or something. [laughter]

Crawford: An exotic creature!

Imbrie: Yes, an exotic creature. But a lot of people have the potential of being composers. All they need is encouragement and they need someone to focus them on the problem and show how exciting it can be and then they realize that they are composers. I think that any teacher worthy of his salt ought to be able to help a student find himself or herself in that way.

Crawford: I guess that's what she meant by that statement.

Imbrie: I think she was ready for it, is what I can say. She had the talent and she had the interest, and I think that any good teacher could have helped her do this. I was probably a good enough teacher to help her realize the fact that she was a composer.

The Teaching of Theory

Crawford: I wanted to have your thoughts about the teaching of theory. You have talked about the fact that it was not being taught effectively and you also talked about how young composers and

university composers are pressed to write about theoretical issues to prove themselves, which you thought was a little overbearing.

Imbrie: Yes. Theory with a capital T is something that universities like because scholars are more comfortable if you write articles on theory than if you write pieces of music. Pieces of music are to them not substitutes for scholarly research.

Many universities put out ads saying that there's an opening at such and such university in the field of theory/composition or composition/theory, meaning that if you're a composer you ought to also be able to write articles--learned articles--on theoretical problems.

Crawford: Pressure to publish then?

Imbrie: Pressure to publish, not just to have your music performed.

There was a time when everybody was using the Piston harmony book--this would be back in the fifties. I was really fond of the Sessions harmony book which had just come out at that time. I felt it was much more thoughtful and much more thorough and trained you to listen, whereas I felt that the Piston harmony book tended to just give you formulas that you could use.

For example, he would say it's a weak progression to go from III to V and it's better to go from IV to V or something like that but then it's almost as if he'd said Beethoven 99 percent of the time will go from IV to V. The students would say, "But what about the 1 percent of the time when he <u>did</u> do that--wasn't there some reason for doing it?" In other words that kind of textbook tended to teach you how to put together an exercise and get a good grade without really understanding the basic reasons for it in a more sophisticated way. I think that instruction in harmony and counterpoint has probably improved since those days.

Crawford: What were your classes like?

Imbrie: Well, I used to teach harmony classes and counterpoint classes to small groups of students, and that was the good thing about Berkeley. There are problems with big schools of music where most of the students are learning their instrument and it's like a conservatory in that they're required to take harmony but if they do then they will take it in huge numbers. There may be a class of 300 or 400 students and one person lecturing to them, and then they turn in their assignments and graduate

students will correct them, whereas we taught classes of twenty, twenty-four students for a period of two years. You teach them for two years in a row--in freshman and sophomore years--so you got to know these kids pretty well as individuals. And you could help them, you could write remarks on their papers and help them try to understand what the problem was, and you could deal with them as individuals, which I think is really very important.

Outstanding Music Department Alumni

Crawford: Who have been some of the outstanding composers that have come out of the department since your time?

Imbrie: You mean made careers for themselves elsewhere? Well, there have been some students who have done pretty well. Some of the more recent ones have been Richard Festinger, for example, who is now teaching at San Francisco State. He's, I think, an excellent composer. And Hi Kyung Kim--there have been quite a few very talented Korean students, especially women. Hi Kyung Kim is now an assistant professor at Santa Cruz and she's up for tenure now.

Crawford: In composition?

Imbrie: In composition, yes. And there's been very recently another woman, Korean and an undergraduate, who took some lessons with me and she's one of the most brilliant students I've ever encountered--Helen Lee is her name. She made a big reputation by writing an opera which was performed.

She got all the people together to perform her opera--got the players and the singers and the actors and the scene designers, all these very busy people, and persuaded them to get together and perform her opera. It was a one-act work lasting maybe forty-five minutes or so, and quite an accomplishment for an undergraduate. It wasn't part of the university orchestra or the university chamber ensemble or anything like that. She just did it on her own and got everybody to agree to do it. [laughter]

Crawford: Is Berkeley even less performance-oriented than Stanford traditionally? You get the impression that it is.

Imbrie: Well, as I said, we don't give degrees in performance and only a certain amount of credit can be given for performance

courses. It has to be group performances, in other words. You don't get credit for taking piano lessons or violin lessons or voice lessons, but you get a limited amount of credit for singing in the chorus or playing in the orchestra or playing in a chamber group.

Crawford: Did you have a relationship with Stanford--your faculties?

Imbrie: Just a formal relationship.

Crawford: Were you were always abreast of what was going on in composition at Stanford?

Imbrie: Oh, yes. I think you could see what was going on. In fact, when I first started Stanford offered me a job at the same time that Berkeley did. I went to Stanford, but I chose Berkeley because I think it developed in a way that was more to my liking. Stanford, I think, has had a troubled career in the music department.

Although there were some good people there, certainly, I think that Berkeley seemed to me closer to the center of things. And there was more going on, especially in those Composer's Forum days. There were people from Stanford but I think that Berkeley was much more active in this way.

Crawford: Who do you remember from Stanford?

Imbrie: Leonard Ratner, Leland Smith, and later John Chowning.

Crawford: How about the Conservatory of Music? You didn't say too much about it.

Imbrie: Well, of course, I taught individual classes at the conservatory at various times as a sort of a supplement to my teaching. I didn't do it on a regular basis but once in a while I would teach a class. And then eventually I started teaching composition to a small number of students. For a while I would go over there once a week but then finally I had them send two or three students. I would never teach more than two or three at a time in composition, but I had sort of that kind of a relationship with the conservatory.

I mentioned Rich Festinger, who originally was a conservatory student of mine. I urged him to come to Cal and do his graduate work at Cal, which he did, so he got his Ph.D. at Cal and is now, as I say, teaching at San Francisco State. But he's also very much involved with the Earplay group and all that, and he's a very positive influence in this area.

Retirement, Music Students, and Advice to Young Composers

Crawford: What about retirement?

Imbrie: Well, as you can tell, this was a place where I didn't appreciate the university's role very much. First of all, they insisted that everybody retire at the age of seventy at the time. It's no longer legal to do that.

Two things: I took a sabbatical the year before my retirement and was not informed that the tax people base your retirement salary on your actual income for the three years of highest income, which are usually the last three years, and so my retirement income is based on one of the years in which I took a sabbatical. If I had known that, I wouldn't have taken a sabbatical. I was not informed of that.

And there were other things that the university did--it didn't give me information on which I could make certain decisions, so I felt that in some ways I could have taken the university to court if I wanted to. But I didn't want to spend my time litigating and it wasn't that big an issue. I would have liked a little more money, but I didn't want to undertake all the hiring of lawyers and all of that.

Crawford: That seems so unfair. You had a sabbatical coming?

Imbrie: Yes, I had it coming, but I needn't have taken it if I hadn't wanted it, and it would have meant that the highest three years of my professorship would be the basis on which they calculated my retirement income for the rest of my life, you see.

I should have known it, perhaps, but it was not pointed out to me and made clear to me. Maybe if I had read the fine print, I would have known it, but there was that kind of thing that soured me a little bit on things.

But in every other respect the university treated me very well. It's just the administration and the financial end of things which was not fair, I felt. But as far as the department and my colleagues and all that, I felt very well.

I would have liked to go on teaching a little longer so that's why I accepted visiting professorships at other places for a while, which I enjoyed very much.

Crawford: I know from talking to professors in other departments that there's an awful lot of warfare going on in some of these departments.

Imbrie: I felt there was very little going on in our department, I felt that ours was a very civilized department. There was a certain amount of tension at first between the musicologists and composers, as I mentioned to you before, but as time went on I think it got better.

There are obviously differences of opinion--there are different interests involved, but there wasn't the type of warfare that I kept hearing about in other places. I've heard about horrible things--people not speaking to each other for years and years, never showing up at the same event because somebody else is going to be there, and all this nasty business, but we had none of that. I felt there was very little of that sort of thing.

Sometimes there was a little testiness between people as there always will be, but I felt that my colleagues were approachable, and even if you disagreed with them on something, somehow you got along and you managed to work it out. So I felt very good about all that aspect of it.

Crawford: Have you seen an appreciable change in the music students in the seventies and eighties?

Imbrie: Well, I think they're very good quality, and, as I mentioned before, one of the things I noticed was that there have been many more Asian students than there used to be; many of them are extremely talented. It's possibly because of their culture--the families expect their children to excel and the children want to please their parents. It's very high on their agenda and so they work very, very hard, and they're very talented, and I just as I said, I had a number of Korean students both at the conservatory and at the university who have impressed me enormously.

I took a couple of trips to Korea. The first time was about eight years ago when a Korean composer down in the Los Angeles area organized a trip for American composers to go and attend a meeting--it was a sort of international group that was meeting in Seoul for a conference. There were some from China and some from Russia and some from the United States, and we all had our music played there and we had conferences.

And Hi Kyung Kim, the woman that I told you about who's now at Santa Cruz, had come over from Korea with her family and had

studied in this country, but previous to that she'd studied with a man in Seoul to whom she wrote me a letter of introduction. I met him and he rolled out the red carpet and showed us around, you know, and we've kept up with him ever since. He came to this country once and we put him up here, so I've had some connection with the Korean scene.

I went back there about a year ago, just exactly a year ago for another similar kind of conference in which we were wined and dined. We went to many concerts, then we were always taken out to dinner.

But I was impressed by the friendliness and the talent. So many of the young Korean composers have been studying at American universities, now. They used to study in France and Germany, and when I was there I would meet a few composers a little bit older--in their forties or late thirties--who spoke French or German, and I would try to get back my French and German. The younger ones mostly know English because they were studying in this country--not necessarily in California. Some of them were studying in Texas, some of them were studying in the east, and all over the place. But most of the young composers in Korea are now American-trained.

I notice it here. If you look at the student orchestra now you see most of the string players are Asian. When I went to a concert at the Seoul Philharmonic the first time I was there, I noticed that the string section was almost entirely made up of women. There were very few men. I asked about that and they said, "Don't worry, we're changing that. Pretty soon we'll have some men, too." It was just the opposite of the situation here.

Crawford: Is it an occupation for women?

Imbrie: My theory is that the parents want their sons to go into business, law, and medicine. They want their daughters to go into the arts. And there's a big school in Seoul, a private school for the students who are particularly interested in the arts, and I'd say three quarters of the students are girls. There are more women composers in Korea than in any other place I've ever seen in proportion to the number of men. I don't know whether it's just because they want to please their parents or whether there are other sociological factors involved. But they are very serious about it. And Hi Kyung Kim once said to me--and it makes you feel very responsible as a teacher--"You know, the three most important men in one's life as a Korean woman are her father, her husband, and her teacher."

When she married another student of mine, an American, her father had just died recently, and I gave the bride away, it was that kind of thing.

Crawford: You are very significant.

Imbrie: It's that they take their teachers very seriously, they take their studies very seriously, and they don't want to disappoint their parents.

Crawford: A fine tradition.

Imbrie: Yes, well, I think they're going to take over the world, that's what I think. [laughter]

Crawford: You mentioned competition. Is it generally more difficult for a young composer now? What advice do you give to a young man or a young woman?

Imbrie: I think it's much more difficult now. All my colleagues and friends of my age who are teaching tell their students, "I don't know why you're going into music, you're going to have a terrible time getting a job," and you have to tell them that for every opening at a university position there are 300 or 400 applicants.

I understand the situation is a little bit better. Whether there's a baby boom--whether there's another bunch of kids coming up and they'll need more spaces for them at the universities or not has a lot to do with the job situation. Each university is churning out five or six Ph.D.s every year. And where are they all going to go?

And yet, there's so much talent out there. I don't get discouraged because I see so many interesting things going on. But things were so much easier in my day. On the other hand I think there's a lot more sophistication now than there was then.

We're much more of a global economy than we used to be and we're very much more aware of what's going on in other parts of the world. There's so many ethnomusicologists around. People are listening to music from all parts of the world. And again, I worry about this concept of "musics"--which frightens me more than anything else, as I've said--this idea that you can compartmentalize it and not stay open to all kinds of music. It's very hard to stay open. There are so many different kinds of influences coming from all over the world.

Marriage to Barbara Cushing and Family

Crawford: We haven't talked about your marriage to Barbara Cushing in 1953.

Imbrie: Well, as I told you, Barbara was the niece of Charles Cushing and that's how I met her.

Crawford: Is she musical?

Imbrie: Yes, she's not a professional musician but she's interested.

She grew up in Woodland and in Davis--that area. Her father was the landscape architect for the Davis campus. He had several guys working for him and they maintained the grounds around the Davis campus and so she grew up in this sort of rural environment. She likes it very much in the valley. She likes the dry, warm, weather. Doesn't like living in the fog. We have a place in Pleasant Hill which we go to sometimes. When her parents died, she and her brother sold the house in Davis and with her share of the proceeds, she bought a little place in Pleasant Hill where she has a nice garden. We put up guests there, she likes to go out there. She would like me to bring a piano out there but I don't want to move all my stuff back and forth.

Crawford: You have such a beautiful working space here.

Imbrie: We built this in '69. We had it built as sort of an addition to our house. I used to use a little basement room that we had when the kids were very small.

Crawford: When were the children born?

Imbrie: Well, my son is now forty so he was born in '58. And my other son was born in '62. He died very suddenly at the age of eighteen. He had one of these heart fibrillation things and suddenly just went just like that.

Crawford: Was he very athletic?

Imbrie: Yes, he was, but he wasn't actually exercising at the time. He was with some friends on a boat and he just collapsed--it was terrible. Well, we don't get over that easily. You never forget something like that.

But he was very talented. He wanted to be in medicine and in research. I have a nephew who's an M.D.-Ph.D. and who does

medical research, and my younger son was very fond of this fellow and he wanted to be like him and so he was planning to graduate and then go into a medical research program.

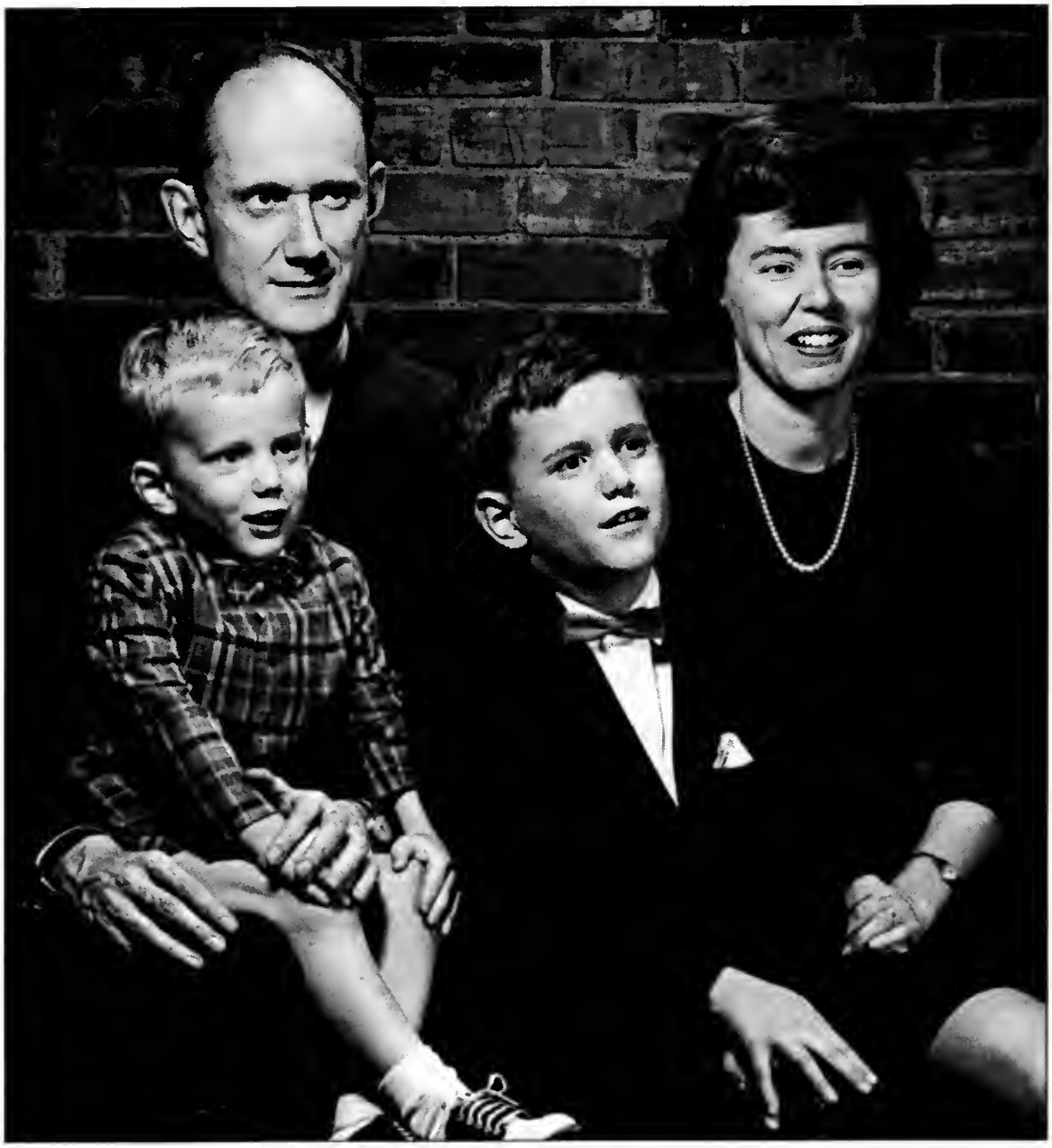
Crawford: He was here at UC?

Imbrie: No, he was going to Princeton. My sons are the fifth generation in our family to go to Princeton. He finished his freshman year at Princeton, and then he died that summer very suddenly. My older son is an aeronautical engineer and he works for Lockheed down in Sunnyvale. He did his undergraduate work at Princeton and then he did his graduate work at Stanford. Lockheed put him through a master's program at Stanford, so he was working half-time and going to school half-time and he got his master's degree, and he's been working at Lockheed ever since. In fact, he started working for them during his summer vacations at Princeton during his junior and senior years. So he's been working for them for--I guess for twenty years, almost.

Andrew and Frances Frazer Imbrie, late 1920s.

Andrew Imbrie in Princeton in the early 1930s.

Andrew Imbrie performing a Chopin Piano Concerto with the student orchestra at Princeton in the early 1940s.



Andrew and Barbara Cushing Imbrie with sons John Haller and Andrew Philip, 1968.

Photo by G. Paul Bishop.

Librettist Oakley Hall and Andrew Imbrie at work on the opera *Angle of Repose*, 1976.

"In Mr. Imbrie's Berkeley studio."

Photos by Barbara Hall.

Andrew Imbrie rehearses scenes from *Angle of Repose* with Nancy Shade, William Lewis, and Susanne Marsee, 1976.

Photo by Caroline Crawford.

Ballroom scene from the world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's *Angle of Repose*, San Francisco Opera, 1976.

Photo by Ron Scherl.

V THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING

Finding the Central Idea

Crawford: We could start today by talking about the process of composing. How does the first idea for a work come to you?

Imbrie: It starts out when I have made the decision or when somebody has asked me to write for a particular group or individual. So if I'm asked to write a string quartet, I have one mental set, if I'm asked to write an opera I have another, or if it's a piece for solo violin or any combination of instruments, usual or unusual, I have to think in terms of that. It's as if you were an architect, the first thing you want to know is the size of the lot and what kind of building they want you to build.

So I just sit at the piano--I tend to work at the piano. A lot of composers work at a desk; I like to work at the piano because I used to be a pianist and I find it exciting to interact with the piano--and I like to make noise.

I will hit upon an idea--I don't think there's such a thing as a bad idea. It's a question of whether you recognize its potential. So almost any idea will work if you know what to do with it. You have to have enough imagination to figure out what that idea might imply, what you might be able to do with it.

So I just improvise or I fool around at the keyboard and I'll come up with something that strikes my fancy. It might be a rhythmic idea, it might be a harmonic progression--it might be a melodic idea or some combination thereof, and I will jot it down. And then I will try to fix it so that it works better.

I think that more time is spent tweaking than in thinking of it in the first place. Thinking of it in the first place is

the easy part. The hard part is projecting it, making it actually seaworthy, if you like, so that it doesn't sink.

People talk about parameters--that's sort of a buzz word these days--there's the melodic parameter, there's the rhythmic, there's the harmonic, there's the textural--all these different aspects of music. There was a time back in the fifties when composers would try to create structures according to different parameters. There would be a twelve-tone row for the pitch parameter, then there would be rhythmic inventions which would be purely abstract, and then there would be textural things. And they would try to put them all together sort of mechanically in order to produce sounds that had never been heard before.

That's not the way I could possibly work. I gave a Faculty Research Lecture in which I tried to show that it's the fusion of parameters that counts, not the separation of them. So you don't take rhythm and treat it completely independently of harmony or melody; all of these things are part of the same thing.

So I will start with an idea which will have some aspects that are rhythmic, some that are harmonic, and some that are textural. What I just said is not exactly true--what I really mean is that you can have an idea which is primarily melodic because you think of a melody, but you know that that melody is not going to be viable until it has a definite rhythmic and harmonic and textural and dynamic character to it. So you have to adjust all of these things so that each so-called parameter supports the others in a very immediate way and it isn't just an abstract combination of mathematical relationships.

Crawford: Do you work the full score out on the piano?

Imbrie: Well, I like to write everything in short score or in piano reduction, although it can't be played. If it were a piece for orchestra, I still write it out as if it were a piano piece. But of course there are too many notes; no pianist could play it.

I know a lot of my students like to write orchestral scores out in full score right from the very beginning because they feel that they know what the instruments are doing. But to me those are decisions that are so detailed that they would get in the way of one's sense of where the piece was going.

At that point I can hear pretty well how the piece is going to sound with an orchestra or with a chamber ensemble or

whatever. I have a pretty good idea of the kind of sound I want to create, but I will worry about the actual details as to when the clarinet is taken over by the oboe, or whether I have double stops on the violin, or whether I have two violins playing the chord--all of these things are subject to all kinds of problems that you have to solve after you have the main idea written down. You can't solve all problems simultaneously, so I think the main thing is to get a sense of where you're going.

I keep suggesting to people that they sketch towards the first cadence or the first arrival point or downbeat or whatever you want to call it. Sketch the melody perhaps until you get to that point, and then you'll say to yourself, "Oh, by that time I should have arrived at such and such a harmony, because I need to get away from where I've been or I need to reaffirm where I've been."

So I will write down the harmony that will be there at the end of the phrase and then I will go back and fill in the bass, let's say. The bass will have its own rhythmic character, and it supports the melody not only just by giving it harmonic support but by giving it rhythmic relief and by supporting it in all kinds of possible ways.

Then there are inner voices and all kinds of imitations or all kinds of little motivic patterns or little silences. In other words all these kinds of things need to be adjusted to support your main idea.

Importance of Architecture and Linear Thinking

Imbrie: I think maybe my training with Roger Sessions has made me very conscious of what he used to call the long line, in which everything has a linear aspect. That helps to propel the music forward. It doesn't mean that other aspects of the music or other so-called parameters are not important. It's not that the linear parameter is more important than other parameters, but it's one of the agencies which propels the music through time, just as rhythms can do.

For instance, you could have a rhythmic idea which would be very exciting--Stravinsky was famous for that. Very often his lines were rather static but very often the rhythms would propel the music forward, keep you guessing and keep you in a state of suspense until they resolved it by clarifying where the downbeat really is. So you could do that if you wanted to,

and then you could postpone the linear decision until later. But this postponement would have an impact on the larger rhythmic structure in the background.

Crawford: Would the basic analysis usually be linear?

Imbrie: I tend to think linearly, but there are times when I want something that will be full of silences and interruptions and there the line will be in the background. It will be there but it won't be the thing that you're thinking of most. It won't be the thing that's in the forefront of the listener's mind. It might be a passage in which you are waiting for something to happen, or in which you're making a transition from one thing to another, and the line may have arrived someplace and you don't want to start moving again right away in a linear fashion. You may want to extend that for a moment before you start another because there has to be an ebb and flow of linear structure as well as everything else.

It means that everything isn't always moving in the same manner all the time. It's not the kind of question that one can answer very easily.

Crawford: We probably belabor the question of architecture too much.

Imbrie: Well, I don't think so, because architecture is very important. Some people like to work like architects--Elliott Carter is a good example. He works out a very intricate architectural scheme for the entire piece and then he fills in all the details. I like his music. It's not the way I compose--I couldn't compose that way because I'm just not built that way. I like to start and I don't know where it's going to take me.

I don't like to see where it's going to take me, although I know, as I've said, that this is a piece for such and such a group and they need a piece that's so many minutes long; I'm not going to write a two-hour Mahler symphony or something. [laughter] I know that I have to write a ten-minute work, so the kind of music that I write will be affected by what I know the duration of it is going to be. But still I don't know exactly where it's going to take me.

Very often, after I have completed the first few phrases and used up some of the energy involved, I know that it needs a change. I know that it needs contrast. The idea is not just do something different, it's to do something that's different in a very specific way to highlight the thing you've already done--different in a specific relation with what you've already written. So very often when I get to that stage in a piece I

have to think of what is the exact nature of the thing which will set off the first part most effectively.

This you learn a lot by studying the classics--studying Mozart. For example, you couldn't take the second theme from one Mozart symphony and put it into another. The second theme is tailor-made to go with the first theme. So the way it contrasts with the first theme is very specific to that first theme, and very often there are hidden relationships between them, you see. There are hidden similarities between them which are not obvious at first.

Haydn, on the other hand, very often would make a second theme that was very clearly another version of the first theme, only it had a different rhythmic character, a different structure, but it would remind you of the first theme and this was something that even his contemporaries were aware of and noted that it was something very characteristic of his style.

Mozart didn't do that so often, although he did it sometimes, too. But each problem is unique. There's no such thing as a formula. For instance, the term "sonata form" was invented after Beethoven's death. Beethoven never heard of sonata form and neither did Mozart or Haydn, they just knew how to write sonatas. As soon as the scholars got to work and defined what sonata form was--I think it was in 1835, sometime like that--that was the time when actual sonatas became less imaginative. I mean, in the Romantic years, the sonata form was perhaps less vital than it was in Mozart's time. They had to discover new ways of expressing themselves.

They would still write symphonies, more or less following the formula, but it didn't have the same kind of impact--even a symphony by Brahms doesn't have the same kind of impact that a symphony by Mozart or Beethoven does for me, although I admire Brahms enormously. He had a tremendous ability to deal with rhythm in a very free and imaginative way, but there's something slightly stuffy about the way he wrote--

Crawford: An exhausted style?

Imbrie: Yes, it's like Victorian furniture.

Crawford: When you think about closure, for instance, are you thinking of the traditional arch with the same kinds of energies?

Imbrie: Closure to me implies that--I use the analogy of throwing a baseball into the air. The energy that you give keeps it in

the air, then finally the law of gravity takes over and the ball hits the ground but there's still some energy left, so it may bounce. It won't necessarily stand still, [laughter] it'll bounce a couple of times. And it seems to me that a phrase, a musical phrase, has some of that quality in that you give it a good deal of energy in launching it, and then that energy carries it forward. Eventually it wants to reach a cadence, but there can be a coda. In other words, the cadence doesn't necessarily mean that everything stops. It's like the bouncing ball. You've arrived at the end of the phrase but still there is still some energy left over and so it will continue a little bit longer, perhaps. Or it might not; it might just stop there, just the way it would if the ball might have hit some mud instead of hitting a hard surface.

Crawford: So there's no formula.

Metrical Hierarchies

Imbrie: There's no formula. But one has to have a sense of whether the energy has reached its goal or not, so I've become very interested in what I call a metrical hierarchy. That is, you have beats and you have measures. I believe and other people have done this, too, that you can have not only measures, but measure groups.

I think most people realize that--for instance, particularly if you're in a fast movement like a Beethoven scherzo--if you take the *Scherzo* of the Ninth Symphony, [articulates, sings] that's 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, but Beethoven himself recognized that these measures formed themselves into groups so that it's one, two, three. And in part of it, he says, *"Ritmo di tre battute"*--replaces--*"Ritmo di quattro battute."* In other words this a rhythm of three measures of three beats or four beats, only it isn't a rhythm, it's a meter. If I were Beethoven, I would have called it a meter rather than a rhythm in that there are metrical hierarchies. You know, sixteenth notes are subdivisions of quarter notes, and quarter notes are subdivisions of measures, and measures are subdivisions of measure groups, and other measure groups can form larger and larger and larger entities which may not be absolutely regular. But I think you can analyze music in this way.

So for instance, the downbeat that comes at the end of the exposition in sonata form would be the most important downbeat

that's arrived up to that point. And the downbeat at the end of the recapitulation corresponds to it, but it's even more important. It's like one huge measure in which you have, let's see, a 4/4 measure in which the third beat would be the end of the exposition and in which the end of the recapitulation would be the first beat of the following measure, as it were. You could analyze the music to show where the different levels of important metrical arrivals take place and you could show how the metrical structure interacts with the phrase structure.

In other words, phrase structure means just where you would breathe, if you were singing it. A phrase ends and another phrase begins, but does the phrase end on a masculine cadence or on a feminine cadence, does it end on a strong beat or a weak beat? There are different kinds.

In fugues, phrases overlap but meter cannot overlap because you can't turn the clock backwards, so there's a difference between rhythm and meter. All of these kinds of studies I use in my analysis class as well as the Schenker type of analysis that everyone does; I believe that analyzing music from this point of view--hierarchically--is very useful to composers, not that you will analyze your own music that way, but just by the process of having done it with Beethoven and Mozart and everybody else, you get a sense of timing.

I think you would strengthen a student's sense of timing by analyzing music in this way, so that you have a sense of, "I can't do it yet, I need another two beats before I can do so and so, or I need another three beats before--or this is too long, I have to shorten it because it's out of proportion." And yet, that doesn't mean that you can't have irregular proportions, it just means that you have a sense of proportion which comes from analyzing music in this way.

Mozart and Process: A Secure Musical Language

Crawford: We always read that *Don Giovanni* flowed full-blown from Mozart's pen because he had it in his head.

Imbrie: Well, Mozart was like that. It's been shown that he wrote as fast as he could. He could hear the music in his head and he wrote it just as fast as he could.

Crawford: Is that part of your process as well?

Imbrie: It's different now because we're in a different kind of culture.

By the way, Mozart did have to make sketches occasionally. I believe that for the last movement of the *Jupiter* Symphony, where there's a lot of intricate counterpoint and where some of the melodies are played above and below each other, he had to work on that and do some sketching. Some of the sketches still survive, so there are times when Mozart had to sketch.

But much of the time he just wrote as fast as he could. Scholars and musicologists are able to show that he would run out of one kind of ink and use another so they got some idea of the order in which he wrote certain things on the score. It is known that very often he would sketch the entire melody and bass first, then fill in the inner parts. You'll have to check with a scholar on this, but that's the impression I have.

You asked me if that is the way I would do it--and I'd say that first of all I'm not Mozart. [laughter] I think Mozart was one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived in any field, and no one dares to compare himself with Mozart. But on the other hand, a lot of composers at that time wrote quickly in the same way, and I think the reason was that there was a kind of universal musical language that everybody grew up with and that Mozart learned from his father, in a way. He was writing symphonies when he was ten years old, and I don't know how many other composers did that but there was a general language that one learned just the way one learns one's own language from childhood. If you work within that language and you can extemporize, and the forms are not learned in school as forms with a capital F, it's just the natural way that music works.

Nowadays, we're living in an eclectic situation. The last time we spoke, the other day, we were talking about how many different kinds of musical cultures there are--and how I hate the word "musics."

But it seems to me that when Mozart wanted to evoke the idea of a Turkish march, he knew very little about what Turkish music was actually like, but there was a Viennese convention of what a Turkish march was and so he knew the kind of music to write that would please the Viennese audience and it would go over as a Turkish march. Nowadays, we would want to know what Turkish music sounded like--

Crawford: You'd want it to be authentic.

Imbrie: Yes, and then you'd try to see whether there was some way that you could fit it into your own idiom. I don't mind borrowing from other cultures or quoting once in a while, but I won't do it unless I can make it work within my own music, unless I can integrate it into my own music. I'm not going to just take something out of context and quote it.

Crawford: You have talked about Ives along those lines.

Imbrie: Yes, Ives did not really integrate in a way that interests me. I think he was trying to be a curmudgeon and I think he succeeded, and a lot of people enjoy it because it seems very refreshing to them. To me it seems unfinished and not quite thought through. That's my problem maybe.

The Sonata Form and Commitment to a Basic Plan

Crawford: Is there more about architecture you want to say?

Imbrie: Well, it's just that architecture to me is something that's very important. This is what I could say--that I don't build like an architect the way that Elliott Carter does, but on the other hand, I recognize that there is such a thing as architecture and you have to be responsible in that regard.

What happens to me is that there's always a moment in the piece when there's a sort of crisis and I get stuck, and it's because I don't have a clear enough idea of how it's all going to add up. I may have succeeded in writing the beginning and I may have succeeded in making a transition to something different and then I have to ask myself, "Is this just going to be another sonata form [laughter] or how am I going to reconcile these two things in the long run? What is the balance going to be? And how am I going to introduce surprises that are needed and still reconcile everything with everything else?" Now, that's the principle of sonata form, if you like, but what comes out is usually not very similar to sonata form, it's something a little more individual with each piece.

I find that there's a certain point when I have to make certain basic decisions, when I have to know how the piece is going to end. I may be only half-way through or two-thirds of the way through, perhaps, but by that time, if I don't know how the piece is going to end, I'm really in a panic. There's this point beyond which I can't move any further without knowing how the piece is going to end, and that's because the need for

architecture becomes so urgent that I have to solve that problem.

Then I will very often sketch a kind of a harmonic plan or linear plan. I know that I've got to get here in another few measures and then I've got to do something else a little bit later in a little longer time or a shorter time and I've got to arrive at such and such a point. And very often I have a foggy idea of how the music is going to go but then once I've gotten that kind of sketch of where it's going to take me, now that I've committed myself in a certain way, then I'm much happier, and then I can work out and expand these sketches and put in all the details--the motifs and the phrase structure and all that.

There will still be some surprises. I will still suddenly realize that I need more time before I can do so and so or that I need less time than I thought I did to do so and so. So all of these things are intuitive in a sense, and I like to always be in touch with my intuition during all parts of the process.

Crawford: It is clear why an eighteenth-century composer would have an easier time.

Imbrie: Yes, an eighteenth-century composer could be completely intuitive because he was completely secure in his musical language. I don't think any composer today is secure. I'm not just saying that I'm insecure, I'm saying that that insecurity is part of the process for us. And maybe it was for them, too, in certain ways, but they knew how to conquer it.

Haydn was very inventive in setting up situations which were really unique and unusual. I once heard over the radio the slow movement of the Symphony No. 64--not one of the late symphonies, one of the middle ones--in which the phrase structure did not correspond with the harmonic structure. In other words, one phrase would stop and there would be a long silence, but the cadence had not been arrived at yet. And then at the beginning of the next phrase he would resolve the cadence of the first phrase and go on and start the second. And then he would interrupt that and then there'd be a long pause. It was crazy and it was wonderful because it worked fine. I pointed this out and the San Francisco Symphony decided to play it one time!

Crawford: He was putting us on.

Imbrie: Sure he was! He did things like that all the time. Haydn would always try funny things and make them work. I think that

intuition plays a large part and you can be insecure even if you're familiar with your own language. What you want to do is to try to find something that will create a sense of insecurity, so that you can resolve it. That's part of the fun of the thing.

For instance, in doing this metrical analysis that I spoke of, very often most classical pieces will be either in 4/4 time or in 3/4 time. So you say, "Okay, that's regular." And then, if you go into the background a little further, you may find other groups of four or other groups of measures that are always four or always three or something.

But in the best music this regularity ceases as you go into the background further and further. In other words, you don't have four measure groups, or you don't have 4/4 measures forming four four-measure groups forming four four at that level and four four at the next level. You see, it's not always four all the way back. Otherwise it would be terribly dull, it would be very mechanical.

The only works of that sort that you could imagine would be, say, dances. For instance, there are dances that Schubert wrote for his friends--a whole series of waltzes--and they're all exactly sixteen measures long. You just play one after another. They're all absolutely charming, but of course that's because everybody was dancing to a predictable pattern and so it was intended for parties, it wasn't intended for concerts.

But if you're going to write something in waltz time or scherzo time or something--you'll find that Haydn and Mozart have irregular phrase groupings all the time in their minuets and in their scherzos. The minuets in Mozart and Haydn symphonies could never be danced to in a dance hall because they're not regular enough.

Hearing One's Own Work Performed; and Quotations in Music

Crawford: You mentioned that when you heard your works performed for the first time, you were stunned. You were pleased, or you saw real problems.

Imbrie: Yes, especially if you're inexperienced. I think the first time you ever hear a piece you've written played by an orchestra, it's a very thrilling moment, provided that the orchestra is good. Unfortunately there are often readings by

student orchestras of student compositions in which the orchestra doesn't do a very good job and so the young composer is horrified at what he hears because it doesn't sound like what he wrote.

But if you have an orchestra that's good and you hear it play your music for the very first time, you suddenly hear these beautiful colors coming out because the instrumental players are so good. You wrote for those colors and you were expecting it to sound good, but the reality of it is so overwhelming at first that you don't notice anything wrong, you just think it's heaven. And then about the second or third rehearsal you begin to realize, wait a minute, I didn't hear something that I wrote because the balance isn't right--maybe the clarinet ought to come out more and maybe the trumpet ought to play a little softer.

After you've done this a few times you get a little bit more canny about it; you're not quite as overwhelmed as the first time. On the other hand, it's always a thrill to hear it the first time. But I find that after a rehearsal I can go home, open the score and say to myself, "Did this work? Did that work?" And I'll take notes: "Now this didn't work so I'll have to remember to tell them so and so." I make notes to myself so that at the next rehearsal I can give a list of things to the conductor that I think need to be adjusted and so forth. So after you've had a certain amount of experience you don't go through this euphoria quite the same way that you do when you first started. [laughter]

Crawford: I think it was after hearing the *Ballad* that you said it was overwhelming.

Imbrie: Yes, that was the first orchestral piece of mine that was ever performed by an orchestra, and it seemed that way at the time.

Crawford: How about music written for a specific event--your *Fanfares*, for instance?

Imbrie: Oh, yes. I called it *Here we Stand* because there were some redwood trees on campus that they didn't chop down. I had two bands stationed about thirty feet apart from one another, interacting, because it was an outdoor performance; it was a piece I did for that occasion. I needed brass instruments so that the sound wouldn't disappear, and I wanted a sort of antiphonal effect of the two bands answering each other back and forth in the woods. I just imagined this amongst these trees, and that was an effect that I wanted to produce--a general feeling of joyousness at the preservation of the trees.

There was nothing very specific there. It wasn't programmatic or anything.

Crawford: We've discussed the reverse--writing a piece and then realizing that you'd been affected by something that you had seen or experienced?

Imbrie: Oh, that's quite possible. You have little private associations--for instance, I guess it was in my Fourth Quartet, I have a kind of a yodeling effect in one movement. I have the instrument going [singing] and I remember that my mother used to give that kind of a call when she wanted to call her children back from play. She would sort of do this little warble. She had just died recently and I was thinking of her when I wrote that passage in a way.

But as I said, I don't feel that this is something that needs saying--you can say it because it might interest somebody, but on the other hand I would hate to think that you had to say it in order for people to appreciate the piece. The piece has to stand on its own feet, and the fact that I may have certain associations with a particular thing, with an emotional thing of some sort, should not be necessary in order for the piece to work.

So sometimes something intrudes and sometimes you quite consciously will do something just for fun. You'll quote a tune of some kind in some context that you want to quote. I don't do it as much as I used to, but there was a time when I used to quote things and never tell anybody what it was I was quoting because I didn't want them to know.

Crawford: I can understand that. You didn't want a tone poem.

Imbrie: No, I didn't want tone poems and yet there are times--when you're writing an opera, that's another thing. You have to create associations with what's going on on stage. Then I think you can use things of this kind quite deliberately.

Angle of Repose, 1976: A Bicentennial Opera

Crawford: We haven't talked about *Angle of Repose*. All of us who were in the company at the time were just overwhelmed with the opera. I know you've talked about it in a general way, but I wanted to ask you a few questions. How about the choice of text--how did you come to choose Stegner's novel?

Imbrie: I had read it. Barbara gave it to me for my birthday shortly before. Then I heard a rumor that the San Francisco Opera was going to ask me to write an opera for the bicentennial year, and it occurred to me that this would be appropriate because of course it was about the West and therefore it wouldn't be two hundred years, but it would be about one hundred years since the days of the gold rush. Let's say it would be the seventies--the 1870s. The premiere of the opera was in 1976, which is the anniversary, obviously, of 1776, and in 1876 you had all these people coming and opening up the west and the mining and the discovery of gold, people coming from the East Coast to the West and settling in this area. It seemed to me that a thing which had to do with California would be a wonderful subject for an opera. Having just read this novel, it occurred to me that this might make a good subject for an opera.

I was a little intimidated by the scope of the novel. It had so many things in it that obviously you couldn't include, that you'd have to take out. It was just too much. You'd have to boil it down and concentrate it into a much shorter book--for instance all that business in Mexico I couldn't do. That would be another opera in itself. So then the question was to find a librettist that would set it up and do it well.

Crawford: Oakley Hall.

Imbrie: Yes, we had to work very hard to find somebody. And finally we found Oakley Hall, and he is a wonderful novelist in his own right. He was not a poet or a playwright.

Crawford: How did you work together? How did you set about evoking the West, as in "My Sweetheart is a Burro Named Lou," so surely?

Imbrie: I tried to evoke the style of pop music of that time. But we communicated mostly by correspondence, much of it in The Bancroft Library. [Andrew Imbrie papers; Music Archives, NRLF, Boxes 1 and 2] We did have an occasional meeting--one in New York, one at Lake Tahoe.

Crawford: Wallace Stegner did not want to do the libretto?

Imbrie: No. Well, I don't blame him. He spent years writing this novel and he got it the way he wanted it and he obviously didn't want to tear it apart. He was very nice about the whole thing, though. He was very encouraging and supportive in every possible way, but he simply didn't want to do it himself. I have a correspondence with him on this. I think the whole correspondence is in the archives there.

Crawford: I can imagine that battle of literature that you might have gone through! You might have thought of doing *Streetcar Named Desire*. [laughter] What a choice to make!

Imbrie: Well, it seemed to me that the fact that it was to be done in San Francisco and it was local history was significant. The head of the San Francisco Opera at that time was horrified that the Chicago Opera had commissioned a European composer to do their opera.

Kurt Herbert Adler wanted an American composer, preferably somebody in this area, and so that seemed very appropriate, not only that the composer should be from this area but that the opera would be about this area. It's the opening of the West and the relation between a very refined young woman from the East, Susan Ward, who is trying to adjust herself to the conditions of the West and marriage to a man who was an engineer who was trying to open up the West. She was bringing her Eastern refinement with her--

Crawford: I thought you described her character beautifully. How did you create her *leitmotif*, which is so memorable. I remember reading that you felt you "became the characters."

Imbrie: The whole question of *leitmotifs* concerned me a bit. I didn't want anything mechanical, or overtly Wagnerian, but it was useful to have references of this kind from time to time.

Susan Ward was what impressed me about that novel. I thought this would be a wonderful subject, and the idea of having letters back to her friend in the East was a good excuse to have arias.

In other words, you'd have an excuse for an aria which is a traditional operatic genre, but in a contemporary opera you could find a reason for having an aria by saying she's sitting down, writing a letter, and then she tells you what the letter says. Once you've set that up, you can do it two or three times.

There were various things that made it possible to think of it operatically. What I was particularly fascinated with in the novel was the way you'd have flashbacks between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between these two sets of people and how their problems interacted with one another--how the historian today is looking back on these ancestors and their lives and how they taught him how to deal with his own problems in the present day. I thought it might be very effective to have scenes in the nineteenth century and then you

fade out the nineteenth century, you fade in the twentieth century and you have the interaction.

Crawford: Jerry Freedman was director. Could you give some details about how you worked together?

Imbrie: His remarks were mostly about the libretto, and about pacing. He spoke of "dead time"--a moment when the audience is likely to lose interest: e.g., if one minor character has a conversation with another. It takes three times as long to sing something as to say it. People may not catch exactly who the minor characters are.

Freedman was a wonderful stage director, and it was a very professional group of people that put the thing on and made it work.

Crawford: Where will it be heard again?

Imbrie: I wish I could tell you. [laughter] If you know of any place, let me know.

Crawford: Is that worrying you that it hasn't been heard again?

Imbrie: Yes, I'd like to have it done again. Recently I've heard talk of a sesquicentennial in the near future; I know that Robert Commanday is very interested in trying to get them to think of doing the *Angle of Repose* and reviving it.

Crawford: Is Lotfi Mansouri very open to contemporary opera?

Imbrie: I don't know. I just had a brief conversation with him and I had a feeling that he was just sort of turning me off. So I don't know. Maybe he'd be interested, maybe he wouldn't. I don't think there's enough money, that's one of the problems.

Crawford: Is the production intact?

Imbrie: Unless it's been cannibalized by now. Of course all that scenery and all those props have probably been used for other purposes and I don't know whether they're still around.

Crawford: What was Mr. Adler's involvement in the production?

Imbrie: I think it was very positive. He kept his hands on everything. He chose all the singers, but he would have them sing for me--for instance, I remember the woman who did the lead role [Nancy Shade]; he saw to it that we got together.

At that time I was in the East writing the opera, as I've said. I had taken a leave of absence from the university and I was working back in Princeton--my original home town--and she came and we found a piano and we rehearsed. She sang some of her regular songs, some of the arias that she knew, just so I could get a feeling of what her voice was like and whether it would be appropriate, and I was amazed at the power of the voice. I had accompanied singers before but not real operatic singers.

It was almost deafening in that small room, her voice was so big, and it was a marvelous voice and so I was thrilled to have someone like that.

Adler wanted American singers and so many American singers, especially in those days, were singing in Europe at the time. They had their training in this country but many of them were singing in German opera houses, for example, and had never sung in this country before. But he wanted all the singers to be American.

Crawford: I think they were--Nancy Shade, Bill Lewis and Chester Ludgen, and mezzo Suzanne Marsee.

Imbrie: Yes, they were all American singers. Some had sung in this country but others had never done so before, and so he got them all together and found just the right people for each part.

Crawford: Would he have done the opera again?

Imbrie: I'm sure he would, although he was very critical at first. I remember when I first started out he wanted to see what I had because he wanted to see what the first scene was going to be like and so I had to send it to him. And he said, "What's the matter? There's no aria!" Because I was sort of setting up the situation, I hadn't reached the point where I thought an aria was possible.

He said, "You've got to have an aria near the beginning because if you don't people are going to tune out." And of course I realized immediately he was absolutely right, so I had to sort of invent it--well, what kind of aria could I have?

You may not recall, but there's a time when Chester Ludgen sings a song, an aria, right near the beginning just five minutes into the opera. He talks about his own physical disabilities and how time has got to heal his wounds and how going into the past is going to teach him.

In other words, there had to be a moment where someone reflects on the situation and sings an aria, and you have to do it right away or else the people will just say, "Oh, this is just another one of these talk shows." [laughter]

So I sat down and I made up my own text for it, then I told the librettist and he was horrified. He wanted to change it, so I said, "All right, you can change this but you can't change that because I need that."

So we compromised finally. I wasn't thinking that my text would be acceptable to him, but I was so anxious to write that aria that I just made up my own words so that I'd have something to set. He changed the words to make them better, but he had to stick more or less with the same rhythmic structure, not that it was a poem or anything, but I'd already written the music, most of it. So we compromised.

I used that same tune as the introduction to the very last scene at the end of the opera--I have the orchestra play that tune as an entr'acte between two scenes. I don't think anybody would remember it because it'd been so long since they'd heard the original aria, but I use that tune again later on.

But Adler was extremely useful. And after he began to see that things were going pretty well and he began to feel that he could trust me, he didn't keep his finger on me to the same degree that he did at first. I had to prove myself to him in the process, and I think after a while he began to trust me a little more.

At the end we timed it--the conductor and I had to make a recording with piano and voice so the singers could be taught what motions it takes and how long it takes to go from one thing to another. They had to block out their actions onstage and they needed this information, so we had to sing it ourselves and we hired a pianist to play it. [laughter] This allowed us to time the whole piece after it was written, and it turned out it was too long. We had about three hours of music.

Crawford: Adler mentioned cuts--I assumed it was a financial concern because of the orchestra time.

Imbrie: He was smart; he said, "They won't tolerate three hours of this. You'll have to cut out twenty minutes." The three hours included two intermissions but it was still too long, so we had to take out twenty minutes.

It was a new opera and it was in a contemporary idiom and I think he was afraid that it would be a little too much to expect of the audience. And also that it would cost a lot more. He was right about that; we had to decide what to cut out. It was like going to a doctor who'd say, "Sorry, we're going to have to amputate. Which would you rather lose, your arm or your leg?" [laughter]

Crawford: Of course it was! Twenty minutes of your creation.

Imbrie: Yes, you have to decide what to cut out--what to amputate. [laughter] So we cut out a complete scene from the beginning of the last act. It turned out, on second thought, that it wasn't absolutely necessary for the understanding of the plot to have that scene, and there were other minor cuts that we made in other places so that it worked. I think it worked.

Crawford: Did you work with Mauceri on the cuts; with Adler?

Imbrie: Adler wasn't involved with the cuts; Mauceri was. He was a real professional; I was very pleased. He was popular with the members of the orchestra, who left a bunch of flowers on his podium at the beginning of the last performance. I'd sort of like to hear how the whole thing would sound.

Crawford: Do you have a videotape of it?

Imbrie: I don't have a video, I have an audiotape, is all I have.

Crawford: Yes, I guess they weren't videotaping in that time.

Imbrie: They might have been but my friend Dick Thomas put it on a CD for me, too, so it's available in that form.

Crawford: Did you have any recorded conversations with Jerry [Freedman] and Adler or any of the production people? That would be interesting to know about.

Imbrie: What they did, at the broadcast, between the acts, was interview us. They had the singers talk about their reaction to the piece. Actually the morale was very good amongst the singers during rehearsals. There was very little of this sort of prima donna business. They were all working hard.

Wagner, Writing a First Opera and *Prometheus Bound*

Crawford: You made the comment, "Wagner was my *Star Wars*"--so you grew up on opera.

Imbrie: Yes. I was a real Wagner fan when I was young. I went to see a performance of *Götterdämmerung* and another one of *Parsifal* when I was about ten years old. I had memorized all the *leitmotifs,* sort of like stamp collections for a kid that age. I knew all the *leitmotifs*--this one's Siegfried, this one's Brünnhilde--and I was totally immersed in it. I didn't understand German, but I had all the scores and I looked through them and I knew what was going on onstage.

Crawford: At the Met [Metropolitan Opera]?

Imbrie: Some at the Met and some in Philadelphia. At that time the Philadelphia Opera would put on productions of operas, and I think there may have been traveling companies, but I did hear good performances of Wagner.

My grandmother lived in Philadelphia and I would often go there for music lessons every Saturday and I would spend the night at my grandmother's house sometimes, and so I think that's where I saw them.

But the whole idea of the hero, or the maiden in distress, running through the fire and rescuing the damsel in distress, bringing her to life again and all the dragons and all the monsters--the idea of being able to do something like that--I wanted to be another Wagner. I just wanted to write operas, and I started to write an opera at the age of ten or twelve, on the subject of Doctor Doolittle or something like that. I never got very far with it.

Then I discovered Mozart operas when I was a teenager, and that of course blew my mind in a way, because I think you have to be a little more sophisticated before you understand them in the same way. It's not a *Star Wars* type of experience, it's much more of an adult experience.

So I'd always wanted to do an opera, and my first opera was done here.

Crawford: Was that good ground work for *Angle of Repose*?

Imbrie: Yes, it was good training, and I sort of still enjoy it. The libretto was written by a friend of mine, Richard Wincor. We

were in the army together and he wrote the libretto for *Three Against Christmas.* That was a good experience so that when I had the chance to write for the San Francisco Opera I felt that I wasn't a complete novice; I'd had a little bit of operatic experience.

I've never been able to do it again, though. The closest I came to it was the piece that I wrote for the Cal dance department and orchestra and chorus and soloist, *Prometheus Bound*, which was done by the students here. It was done twice, the first time with dance and second time in concert form about ten years later. But it was all done at Cal.

Actually it could never be done professionally because the translation of the original Greek drama is copyrighted and I didn't use the purest form of that. I used several other translations and intermingled them so that the copyright problems would be a nightmare if anybody wanted to do it commercially.

Crawford: Oh, what a shame.

Imbrie: Richard Wincor, who wrote the libretto for the first opera, is a lawyer and he specializes in such things as copyright law and he told me I was crazy to do that.

Crawford: Because he knew that it would limit the performances?

Imbrie: Yes, so I don't think it will ever be done professionally.

Crawford: How do you feel about that?

Imbrie: Well, I've gotten to the point now where I prefer to set texts that are in the public domain whenever possible, although I have set some texts that aren't.

I usually let publishers worry about these things. I've never really come to terms with it, properly, except in the case of *Angle of Repose*, where there was a real contract for the writing of the libretto--that was all worked out by the lawyers and so forth. But just setting texts for songs, I now tend to look for texts that are in the public domain so I don't have this problem.

For this recent thing that I'm doing for the San Francisco Girls Chorus, I do have some texts by e. e. cummings. I've set his poems before and there seems to have been very few problems. Apparently his publishers don't seem to object too much to this, but one does have to worry about these things,

and I don't quite know how to deal with it. I don't like to get involved in all these legalistic things.

On Critics and Abstraction and Music

Crawford: You've said that you feel that style is very personal, so I'm wondering if you read critics or take into account what they say. Many times two critics seem to have gone to two different performances. I have notes about one of the string quartets and the two critics--I think one was a record guide and one was the major newspaper--they had totally opposing views about the piece.

Imbrie: Well, I don't remember that particular occasion but [laughter] that's quite possible.

Crawford: What does it mean to you as a composer?

Imbrie: Well, of course everybody likes to get good reviews, there's no doubt about that. Commanday is an old friend of mine, he's given me good reviews on the whole, although sometimes he's said things that are a little negative--but most of the time he gives me good reviews. I've gotten some poor reviews and that always makes me mad as it would anybody.

But I'm sometimes a little puzzled. The *New York Times* right now is famous for being not at all interested in contemporary music, they want crossover stuff, but one of the critics gave me what I suppose is a good review, and I had a hard time understanding what he was talking about because it just seemed to me that he was on a different wavelength. But he was saying nice things and so I had to be pleased.

He used words such as abstraction, and I don't know what he meant by abstraction because to me music is the most concrete of all the arts. It's the least abstract because in music something's really happening whereas in the theater, in a play, you're pretending that somebody is doing something, but they're not really doing it, they're just acting.

Even abstract painting is not abstract; it's concrete because you're really getting down to the actual materials and dealing with them directly instead of through some interpretation.

It seems to me that a play is an abstraction from real life whereas a piece of music, unless it's program music, is the real thing. You can't explain what it is. You can't say, "Well, this is about so and so."

Crawford: Is there a phenomenon of getting it or not understanding it, not having it communicate clearly to an audience?

Imbrie: I think so. I think there are people who are turned off by certain kinds of music because it's not to their taste. It's like anything else. Some people don't like certain kinds of food and it's just that I like this and you like that and I don't like this and I can tolerate this--

Crawford: That I can understand. Heuwell Tircuit was once reviewing a contemporary music piece for the *Chronicle*--not a piece of yours--but he analyzed it at length and then he said, "But in the last analysis it's no fun."

Imbrie: Sure. Why not? I mean that's a perfectly legitimate response. I think a piece of music can have all kinds of admirable qualities and yet it might leave you cold in some way. You might feel, "Okay, but it doesn't grab me. I can admire it, but it doesn't really grab me."

Crawford: Perhaps what you said about Messiaen is a case in point--that his music can be a kind of retreat?

Imbrie: Yes, it's a retreat--I think I called it a magic retreat from humanism, in the sense that by using formulas and magical incantations, he's retreating from real expression, it seems to me.

Crawford: Is it a kind of fantasy?

Imbrie: No, it's not so much fantasy as it is ritual. It's just ritualistic in a way that bores me. A lot of people don't agree with this, but I find it's overly sweet in a way. It's like too much perfume--you go to a church and there's too much of the smell of the incense and there's too much bowing and scraping. I'm not criticizing religion, I'm just criticizing the kind of external trappings of religion. I feel there's something phony about this music. He's trying to show how religious he is, sort of bowing and scraping, and that's the way it affects me. Now, that's my taste, you see. Somebody else's taste would be different. But I find that it's repetitive, it's much too long, it goes on much too long--

Crawford: So you won't go out of your way to go to a concert. We have talked about minimalism--is that another kind of retreat from reality?

Imbrie: More or less. It's just a question of repetition. I think it has a lot to do with audiences today being less sophisticated than they were.

Crawford: Does that have to do with exposure?

Imbrie: Yes. I think there's less good musical training in the schools than there was, and something I admired about Bob Commanday while he was the critic on the *Chronicle* was that he wrote many pieces about the artistic life of the community, music in the schools, and he would take the trouble to go to competitions of choral societies, because he was a choral conductor himself, and he was interested in the whole quality of music education in the San Francisco area.

Crawford: He fought for that for many years.

Imbrie: Yes, he felt that was terribly important. I have a feeling that because of budget cuts, the first thing that always goes is music in the schools. Whenever there is a budget cut the first thing they get rid of is music, except maybe for the marching band or something like that, so I think kids are less educated, and fewer people grow up and are less familiar with classical music and with contemporary music. They want to daydream while they go to a concert--perhaps they go to a concert because they want to be seen there.

Crawford: More so than it used to be?

Imbrie: I think more so than it used to be. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm just rationalizing, but as I've said, they used to have a group of concerts at the San Francisco Symphony called the New and Unusual Music Series and a lot of people started calling it the Cruel and Unusual Music Series. There wasn't enough public support for that, and the minimalists are sort of writing what I call rich man's rock music.

Crawford: A kind of movie music?

Imbrie: Yes, well, it's not even moving. Movie music can actually move sometimes, but this music doesn't really move, it just repeats the way some rock music does. It just repeats something over and over again sort of with a hypnotic effect. I think it has a lot to do with marijuana and all of that.

Crawford: Does it stand up better with another dimension like dance?

Imbrie: Well, it also needs line and it needs motion, it needs harmony, it needs counterpoint, you name it! [laughter]

On the Choosing of Texts

Crawford: We haven't talked about the process of choosing and setting texts.

Imbrie: Whenever I need a text, I have a terrible time choosing one because it's not only the quality of the text, it's whether or not it suits my purposes or not. I think T. S. Eliot is a good poet, but I would never set a poem of T. S. Eliot's.

Crawford: Why?

Imbrie: Because it's too complicated and it has too many levels of meaning and, too, it doesn't suit my particular needs. I'm not making a judgement about the quality of his poetry; I'm just saying I couldn't set it. I don't respond in a way that would make it work, and I think a lot of other composers tend to gravitate to poets that have certain qualities.

e. e. cummings is a good example--I know lots of composers who set e. e. cummings. There's something about his poetry which just cries out to be set to music. It's just so ebullient and so much fun and in many ways very profound and very touching that you want to set it to music. I know lots of other people who write very different music from mine who will set that kind of text; on the other hand there are other poets that a lot of people set that I don't set just because it doesn't hit me right, it doesn't hit me the way it hits them.

Crawford: I was listening to the *Campion Songs*, and I wondered about that choice of text. [Thomas Campion, 1567-1620]

Imbrie: I haven't set him except on that occasion. But this was because the *Campion Songs* were for four singers. Of course he, himself, was a composer, as you know, and he wrote settings for his own poems. He wrote for small groups of singers--about four, five or six singers--and so the poetry is obviously meant to be set to music, it's set up that way.

So when I had to write for a quartet of singers, I suddenly realized that there were these madrigal composers of that

period or a little later who wrote for just this kind of thing. And I looked at them and they seemed very, very appropriate. I don't know that I would have done it if it had been for a solo or anything like that. But you have to keep looking. I find it very difficult to choose. It takes me sometimes almost as long to find a text as it does to write the music.

Crawford: How did you select the text for the Requiem?

Imbrie: Well, this was a more complex thing. Of course it was in memory of my son who had died recently. The San Francisco Symphony had commissioned me to write a choral work and it was about that time that my son died very suddenly, and so I decided the only thing that I really wanted to do was to write a Requiem.

But I didn't want to just set the Latin text. I'm not a Roman Catholic, I'm a Protestant, but other non-Catholics had done it. After all, Brahms wrote the *German Requiem,* in which he used different texts completely, and there are others who have done Latin texts without being ritualistic about it.

I decided I needed a kind of balance between the traditional Latin text and certain other poems that would interact with them, so I had to look for poems that would reflect on the meaning of the Latin texts and in which there would be a constant shift of emphasis from the English to the Latin and back and forth. The chorus at first would sing in Latin and then the soloist would sing in English. And then later on they would mingle--I would change the roles of the chorus and the soloist and the Latin and the English in various ways that seemed to me appropriate.

The climax of the whole thing, really, is the "Death be not proud." I felt the whole thing was leaning toward that, and I realized just as I was about to get to it that I needed an approach to that poem which neither the chorus nor the soloist could provide. I needed an orchestral approach--something that would build up the tension to the point where you could come out with an outburst like that: "Death be not proud," because I regarded it as a kind of outburst.

And so I had a long orchestral interlude, which is just as well because the orchestra had never had a real solo. It never had a passage in which it was the main actor. So here's the place where the orchestra takes first place, and it gets more and more intense and more and more intense until finally the chorus comes in. And then the chorus sings in unison, or in octaves, rather than in parts, to focus the text as much as

possible. And then as it reaches the "Death, thou must die," the chorus comes way down, and then the soloist comes in. The soprano soloist sings her highest note at that point. So the relation between chorus, soloist, and orchestra was something that I felt was very important.

Finally at the end of the piece it goes back and recapitulates the opening again and kind of winds up and ties up the knot and has a quiet ending. But I was thinking that as it ended one would still remember the soprano's high note because it happened not too long before.

One of the things that interests me is that after a piece is over there is a fraction of a second or three or four seconds before anybody applauds; there's this moment when the piece is over, and very often I have the impression of the whole piece suddenly standing there almost, as a moment of time. Your impression of the entire piece suddenly solidifies just before the applause begins. There's a moment when the music is stopped and before the applause begins when you sort of say, "Yes!" You know if it's successful.

Crawford: It comes together for you.

Imbrie: It comes together in your mind before the applause. Then the applause sort of scatters it.

And I wanted that moment to be the time that you hear the quiet ending and the music stops and then all of a sudden you recall that high note in the soprano and all the other things that happened in the moment before the applause begins--if there is any. And I was hoping that that would happen.

Crawford: And it did.

Imbrie: I hope so. I don't know whether you saw that it's been recorded. It's going to come out on a CD this summer. It's the Riverside Orchestra in New York that's done it, with soprano Lisa Saffer.

Crawford: I heard the library recording.

Imbrie: Yes, that was the San Francisco performance. I was hoping that they would put it out on CD, but then they changed conductors, and then one thing and another, and they never follow through. It was just that their budget wasn't such that they could do it--they wanted to do something more popular. We finally got it together [in New York]. It took years and years. It had to get funding from all kinds of sources. And it was done last

winter in New York, on the Bridge label. I'm hoping it will come out by the end of this summer.

It was done as a public concert and that was the one I told you was reviewed in the *New York Times* and the guy said "abstract."

I went to the recording sessions and I helped decide what should be done and so forth. I don't have to go and help them edit it, because I've done that already. It will come out on the same CD with my Third Piano Concerto which was done by this same orchestra several years ago.

Crawford: You said of the Requiem: "I wanted a song, not a sermon."

Imbrie: Yes. [laughter] That's right, I wanted it to be a song. I didn't want it to be teaching--you know, standing there and giving you the rules and regulations.

Crawford: You didn't run through an entire requiem mass.

Imbrie: No. I took out lots of it. I mean, I just used certain portions of the mass and just some of the texts and I cut out other parts of it. And then I interpolated these other poems from English poems.

Crawford: Let us talk about other of your works. You had said you were especially fond of the First Symphony.

Imbrie: Well, that's one of them. I think the Requiem, the Fourth and Fifth Quartets and of course the original Violin Concerto, the one that I wrote in 1954 for the Koussevitzsky Foundation, and of course the opera.

You know, a lot of pieces of mine I'm very proud of. I think there are some that don't stand out in my mind as much as others do, but I'm fairly satisfied with a large number of the pieces.

Crawford: You said *Angle of Repose* takes a big place.

Imbrie: Yes, of course. It's the most ambitious thing I ever did. It's a very specialized thing, and although I was a great opera enthusiast when I was a kid and I still am, the thought of writing an opera now would horrify me unless somebody came up with the budget and a concrete proposal. That's the last time I've written an opera and that was more than twenty years ago.

Crawford: Hard to believe.

Imbrie: Yes, '76. I've been doing a lot of other things since then. So opera has not been at the forefront of my consciousness.

Crawford: Do you have an agent putting *Angle of Repose* in front of producers?

Imbrie: I have a publisher who's supposed to do it, but they don't. It's now Schirmer's who's in charge of that. The publisher I used to have was bought out by Schirmer's. The lady who's supposed to do this was a grad student at Cal. She's very nice, I just don't have a feeling that they're promoting my music as they should.

A lot of composers these days apparently do hire agents to do their work for them. They hire them themselves and get them to aggressively promote their music. I haven't done that, I'm sorry to say. People keep telling me I should.

Crawford: It seems to me that a lot of companies are getting braver about doing twentieth-century works, and your opera can be called accessible, don't you agree?

Imbrie: Well, I'm glad you think so because I have the feeling that a lot of the twentieth-century works they're doing now are too accessible in a sense. I don't mean just too accessible, I mean they're not very interesting musically. They're more or less plays with a kind of a musical background. I've heard a few and I'm not tempted to go and hear a lot of these things.

I think a lot of orchestral works are like that, too. There are certain younger composers now who are commissioned to write short five- or ten-minute pieces for orchestra that will be brilliantly orchestrated. And it will sound like a million dollars, but it's all over and then you can forget it, and then people feel that they have done their bit for contemporary music. I don't want to list them all because I don't want to say bad things about others.

Crawford: You might forget some of them.

Imbrie: I might regret some of them, too. [laughter]

VI OTHER TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS; FESTIVALS; EVALUATIONS

Visiting Professorships at the University of Alabama, University of Chicago, New York University, Harvard, and Princeton Associations

Crawford: Let's talk about some of the other teaching you have done. You've taught in a lot of different places all over the country. Is there a different language emerging in any sense at all?

Imbrie: I don't get the impression that there are regional languages, particularly.

Crawford: Nothing from the South?

Imbrie: In the South a lot of the students had church jobs. There are an awful lot of churches in places like Tuscaloosa or any southern town--many, many different denominations of Protestant and also Catholic, and a lot of the musicians augment their income by having organist jobs, choral conducting jobs at churches and oriented toward church music in that sense, and to a greater degree than in other parts of the country.

But when it comes to their music, the kind of music they write, they differ from one another to a considerable extent. Some of them are fairly naive and some of them are quite sophisticated, whereas at a place like Harvard, I felt that there were a lot of people from other countries and so it was much more cosmopolitan, obviously. At Harvard there was one student from Australia, and one from Scotland, and one from India, and so forth.

So there was a lot of disparity, and again, I find that there are many different kinds of music being written but I don't feel that there are local styles as such in the South. Perhaps things tend to be a little more diatonic with some of

the more church-oriented people but there are people there who are writing just the same kind of music you'd expect from anyplace.

Crawford: Do they try to assign students to you who write in the same vein as you?

Imbrie: Oh, no! I don't think so. There aren't that many students, in the first place, in most of these places. I mean, usually there will be anywhere from half a dozen to a dozen graduate students in composition at any one of these institutions, and depending on their schedules, the visiting professor usually gets to work with a majority of the graduate students in composition because that's their opportunity to study with another person.

I know that at Harvard I taught most of the students who were there at the time. There are one or two that I didn't, and I think the same is true in Chicago. There were a few I didn't teach, but it wasn't because of style or because of anything like that.

Crawford: Do the various departments welcome all kinds of teacher-composers?

Imbrie: I notice a healthy disparity of styles, by and large. There seems to be a genuine effort to discover and nourish talent as such. Of course, there will always be limits: there must be some evidence of discipline.

Crawford: You said you felt at home at Brandeis, where you taught in the 1980s--that the approach was more like Berkeley's. Was it Harvard that you felt was so focused on the linguistics of theory?

Imbrie: Maybe Princeton is more like that. But that's changed, you see, because the Milton Babbitt influence was very strong at Princeton, but one of the people they've got there is Steve Mackie--who used to be a student of mine at Brandeis, as a matter of fact. He was one of my students at Brandeis for a year or so. He's got his eye on the bottom line, I think.

He started out as a guitarist, but then--I know he had a work done by the Chicago Symphony while I was there and one of the things that happened in part of the piece involved having a pizza delivered to the tympani player. [laughter] That kind of thing, you know. I think he tried to do flashy things like that, and when I kidded him about it, he said, "Yes, I know, it's controversial." Controversial's his way of putting it.

Crawford: You've given me a list of names of places and people where you have taught--for instance, in Chicago you have the names John Eaton and Anne Robertson, and Ralph Shapey.

Imbrie: Ralph Shapey is retired now from Chicago, which is one of the places I taught. John Eaton is an old friend of mine who graduated from Princeton, oh, maybe ten years or so after I did, but I got to know him because he studied with Sessions, also, and he's had an interesting career. He taught at Indiana University before he went to Chicago. As a matter of fact, I think it was through him that I got the offer at Indiana that I told you about, so I've known Eaton for a long time.

He's quite a character. He was interested in music using quarter tones, in other words, having two pianos that were tuned a quarter tone apart and he wrote operas this way and had people sing this way. He claims that people can easily learn to distinguish C-sharp from C-double sharp and all this kind of thing--and he's written a lot of music of this sort and other kinds, too--a very entertaining and interesting guy.

I think he was responsible for my being invited as a guest professor at Chicago; once because he was on leave and once because someone else was on leave and so they needed somebody for one year. When you're retired, sometimes people ask you to teach to fill in a vacancy when someone's on leave, and that's how I had the opportunity to teach at University of Chicago a couple of times.

I found it like Berkeley in the sense that it's not a school of music, it's a music department, and they do have a student orchestra somewhat like ours, but they also have funding for a chamber ensemble--a professional chamber ensemble--to come and perform student compositions, which is a very good idea. They also have musicologists and ethnomusicologists, so the setup is quite similar to Berkeley.

I had some very interesting student composers there. Some of them were really off the wall and some of them were very talented and very serious. I taught there two different times. The first time I also had some private lessons with undergraduates and I was impressed with the individuality of these undergraduates--how their interests were well defined, how they were thoughtful--they seemed like very interesting and intelligent students. I was very much impressed.

Crawford: Not surprising, given the reputation of the university.

Imbrie: It has a very good reputation. It's also private--it's not a state university--it's called University of Chicago, but it is a private college, so people have to pay a pretty good amount to study there--it's like being at Princeton or Harvard or Yale as opposed to being at Berkeley, so some of these students are perhaps wealthier on the whole than many of the students here. But I was impressed with the ones that I taught there and of course some of them were on scholarships and so forth. I suppose I had eight or ten students that I worked with--graduate students. The second time I didn't have any undergraduate students. I prefer to deal with them individually, as I usually do, if I can--I don't have to worry so much about making sure that everybody else is paying attention and I can spend more time on the individual and his problems.

Crawford: And Anne Robertson? Philip Gossett?

Imbrie: Yes, well, Anne Robertson was the chair of the department and she was very nice. And Gossett is a musicologist who specializes in Rossini. He's doing a complete edition of the operas of Rossini, and some of the graduate students there were helping to pay their way by working for him--doing secretarial work for that project and so forth.

Ralph Shapey is now retired--he was just on the point of retiring the first time I was there.

Crawford: But his works are performed.

Imbrie: Oh, yes. Yes, he's an interesting guy. He's from Philadelphia originally--a real curmudgeon type. [laughter]

Crawford: What would you say about New York University?

Imbrie: Well, I was there just one semester. I guess that was in the early nineties. It was after I retired from here, as Chicago was. The department there is very strange because there are two music departments, one that's under the school of education and one that's under the college of letters and science. The school of education has a composition program in their music department, and they also have performance, so that's the sort of conservatory-type situation, but the other department specializes in musicology and also has a composition department.

There seems to be a historical reason for this. They were founded separately and I don't really remember the history of it, but you have these two different music composition programs

going on at the same university. And I knew, for instance, that one of my undergraduate students here--in fact it was Linda Kernohan, whom you just talked about, this lady who is now studying composition as a doctoral candidate at UC San Diego--she told me that she was going to be at NYU, and I said, "Oh, that's great! I'll see you then. I'll be there." But I couldn't find her any place. I didn't know where she was and it took me some time to realize that she was in the other music department. [laughter]

Crawford: That must be unique.

Imbrie: It's really weird. I guess so. It's some sort of historical accident that the two departments were founded in separate ways, and somehow they managed to co-exist.

Crawford: Was that an exciting climate?

Imbrie: Yes, there were some interesting students. There were more international students there. I remember I had one from Portugal and there was one from Taiwan and students from other places and also a lot of local students. And they varied. Some of them were more talented than others, but there were some very good ones.

Crawford: Your own family has had five generations at Princeton, and you have always had an involvement with Princeton, haven't you?

Imbrie: Well, the current involvement--of course, Princeton demands a great deal of loyalty from its graduates and so your class always gets in touch with you and asks for money, you know? [laughter] They ask for money for the university. But Princeton is more energetic in that way than most other colleges and every five years they have a big reunion at Princeton where you're all supposed to go back and greet your classmates. I've been to one or two of these.

Sometimes there are many reunions that go on outside the university. There was one in the San Francisco area--a few of my classmates who happened to live in the area organized a little mini-reunion and invited all our classmates or whoever could come to San Francisco and we showed them around and gave parties for them.

And one time I invited them while they were here--I wasn't one of the organizers but my wife and I decided we would entertain them. We entertained them at The Faculty Club and then I took them out to see the Campanile. It was almost twelve o'clock and I wanted them to hear the chimes of the

Campanile, and one of the guys said, "I have to go to the bathroom," and I said, "No, no, you don't; you've got to wait." And just then the chimes started, it was because we had the chimes play Princeton songs, you see? [laughter] So they sort of went for that.

Crawford: Princeton songs for twenty minutes?

Imbrie: I think they played other things, too. But they were very much impressed with that--that really blew their minds. But Princeton demands a lot of loyalty from its graduates.

The only current connection I have with them is that I'm on the advisory board that comes there every so often for the music department. People who are in the field of music who are Princeton graduates are asked to come to these meetings, and we meet with members of the department and with the chairman and they talk about current problems and our advice is asked. The administration likes to know what this committee thinks about the way that the department is going, so I get back there once every year or so. Last fall about this time I went there, and they just have a new music building now, and so that was very exciting.

Postwar Avant-Garde Music at Princeton and the American Society of Composers at the Universities

Crawford: There have been articles recently in the *New York Times* written by composers who are lamenting, really, that avant-garde that came from Princeton after the war. What generated all of that?

Imbrie: I graduated in 1942 and was not part of that, but I knew a lot of the people in that generation. It was the Milton Babbitt school, essentially--the people who studied with Milton Babbitt, as I've said. Many of them now are just about retiring at various universities. There are some at Harvard and there are some here and there, so that generation has been very significant, I think, in our culture. And Princeton was the place where what is now known as Society of Composers, Incorporated, was first founded. American Society for Composers at the Universities, I think it was at that time, and it was started at Princeton by a group of these people who felt that university composers needed a voice. They needed to have a magazine and keep in touch with one another.

This has since expanded into this other organization which is now nationwide and has its headquarters in Iowa--they put on concerts at various universities at different times each year. There are regional concerts and there's a national meeting, and when I was in Alabama as a visiting composer there, visiting professor, the University of Alabama happened to be the site of that particular national meeting of the Society of Composers and it was very interesting. They put on concerts by people from different universities--a lot from the South, from the Midwest and a lot from places that you never hear of. The quality was very good of the music and the performances. I think this is a wonderful thing and I think it all got started by this group in Princeton.

Crawford: Is the department at Princeton reflective of this kind of musical thinking still?

Imbrie: I don't think it is. And in fact, I don't think that they had any idea how important this thing would become and how far away it would get from their original conceptions--the kind of music that's now being played at these places is not necessarily the kind of music that these original Princeton people would have approved of.

Crawford: Really!

Imbrie: Oh, all kinds of different styles are involved. And that's fine. What I think is good about it is it diversifies the culture so that we're not dependent on New York or a Los Angeles or some big cultural center.

Crawford: That's important.

Imbrie: Yes, it's very important for this country to set up cultural centers all over and in other cities, just the way that we did. We felt that about San Francisco at the Composer's Forum and that sort of thing. I think other cities are doing that or should be doing that. This organization helps not only cities, but universities to keep this sort of thing going.

Crawford: So you see a positive direction for performance--

Imbrie: Oh, yes. I think it's very good--they have conferences and meetings and then discussions on various topics with speakers, and they publish a quarterly magazine or something like that, so a lot of it may not be very good, but you have to be heard and you have to have a lot of activity in order for good things to come. You have to have an environment in which things can come.

Northwestern's School of Music, 1994

Crawford: Was there a Northwestern connection?

Imbrie: Yes, I taught one day a week at Northwestern when I was at Chicago. I taught four students is what it amounted to.

Northwestern was just a kind of a part-time thing. But that was fun, it was nice to see what was going on. There again, Northwestern is a school of music rather than a department, but it surprised me that the composers and the performers didn't interact very much. I was surprised by that. The performers there worked in a completely different building from where the composers were and I didn't get the sense that the composers were very much together with the performers.

In general I had the feeling that the grass on the other side always looks greener. When you're teaching at a place like Berkeley you imagine that a school of music must be in some ways like paradise because you have all these wonderful performers and they can all play your music. But after my experience at places like NYU and the San Francisco Conservatory, I suddenly realized that the student composers at these places where all the performers are have just as much trouble getting performers to do their music as we do at Berkeley, the reason being that the performances students' teachers are grooming them for are competitions and they want them to be able to play the standard repertory at competitions so they can win prizes, and they don't want them to waste their time playing music by their friends.

Crawford: What about the conservatory here?

Imbrie: Student composers at the conservatory are expected to have a recital and that's one of their requirements so they have to get the students to do it. They manage to, but sometimes I've had some of them say they had to hire people to do it because they couldn't get enough students, and yet the students, I think, don't have any objection to doing it. On the whole they're very nice, they want to, they're friends, but they just don't have the time. Their teachers are saying, "You've got to win such and such a competition if you want to have a career." Maybe I'm oversimplifying. I'm sure I am.

I was just talking to someone who had been at Indiana University where I also spent a little time, as I told you, and there I imagined it must be marvelous because you can have all your music played by other students, but the same situation

apparently holds there; she said that she had been a pianist at Indiana as well as a composer and that she had a hard time getting her music performed. One of the ways she did it was that by being a pianist she could play other people's music and they had to play her music. [laughter]

Festival Associations: Sandpoint, Idaho, 1989-1993, and Tanglewood, 1991; Gunther Schuller

Crawford: Let's talk about some of the festivals you have been associated with: Tanglewood and Sandpoint, to start with.

Imbrie: Well, I should say there's a relation between Tanglewood and Sandpoint in that Gunther Schuller is the man who started the Sandpoint composition program, conducting program, and chamber music program. I'm afraid it's not doing very well now. I think it may be in limbo right now. It's run out of money and they need more support.

The reason Schuller set this up was that he was disgusted with Tanglewood. He was very important to Tanglewood for a while, but he decided that it was not going in the direction that he wanted it to, and I don't want to go into that in great detail because I don't really know the ins and outs, but he felt that the composition program at Tanglewood left much to be desired and maybe also the conducting and performance program, I don't know, but he wanted to set up his own shop.

So he did it at Sandpoint, Idaho, in the panhandle of Idaho. It's quite a remote area on a beautiful lake on quite a high mountain. You have to drive thirty or forty minutes from the town of Sandpoint to get there--it's a ski resort during the wintertime and during the summer they use it for a music program. Then down in the city there's a big baseball field where they had outdoor concerts in the summertime, and this appeals to the locals, as they have everything including rock groups.

The Spokane Symphony comes there and Gunther Schuller used to conduct these concerts with the Spokane Symphony and some of his conducting students would get a chance to conduct the Spokane Symphony. One of his students would do the first movement of a Beethoven symphony and another student would do the second movement, so they would get a chance to conduct a real, live professional orchestra, which I thought was wonderful. I never heard of any other system like that. At

Tanglewood the students certainly don't get to conduct the Boston Symphony, I'll tell you that. [laughter]

But at Sandpoint, there was a composition program and Gunther would invite various other composers to that--he didn't do that himself. He invited me, and I did it four different years, '89, '90, '92, and '93. Those are the four years in which I did the composing program.

He had maybe half a dozen composition students there and it was a kind of a mini-Tanglewood, only he wanted to do it on his terms. He would invite the students, and there were some very interesting and talented ones and I've heard from many of them since, since many of them have gotten jobs at various universities.

Crawford: You were chief resident composer?

Imbrie: I was the resident person who taught. Gunther was busy doing the conducting program and organizing the chamber music program, a pretty good chamber music program, so it was very exciting. There were lots of concerts and then there were lots of events of one sort or another. And this went on for four weeks during the summertime.

Then I was at Tanglewood during the summer of '91, the composer in residence there, and that was obviously much bigger and fancier.

Crawford: Very prestigious.

Imbrie: Very prestigious thing. I was able to select two or three of the composition students who came there so I took a couple of the graduate students that I had worked with that I felt were particularly talented and then there were some others that were selected. There was quite a variety and some of them were quite good.

The student orchestra there was excellent and they performed my First Symphony, for example. And there was an ensemble that did some of my chamber music and also the chamber music by the students was performed by very good performers, so I thought it was a very healthy environment at that time.

We went to lots of concerts and of course the Boston Symphony was there and gave concerts. They did many of the Mozart piano concertos with various soloists, which was lots of fun.

I wasn't impressed with their vocal program at that time. The kind of music that the singers were supposed to sing was lacking in interest. The repertory was not good. I think there have been some changes--I've heard from others that there have been more and more changes.

But ever since Ozawa has taken over, some of the people who used to be very prominent in organizing the festival have been let go. Ozawa is trying to do it his way--there are a lot more Europeans being involved in it, so a lot of Europeans go there to get exposure whereas originally it was supposed to be an American institution. Not that I'm so patriotic that I think America comes first, always, but it seems to me Europeans have a lot of festivals of this kind and that there ought to be more opportunities for American composers and performers.

Crawford: That's perhaps what Gunther Schuller was upset about--

Imbrie: I know that Gunther Schuller is very upset about it. You get him talking about that and he really raises the roof, and I don't really know by firsthand experience, because when I was there there was some European influence, which is fine, but I didn't have a feeling that they were taking over to the extent that I hear they are now.

Crawford: And that's a month?

Imbrie: It's most of the summer, July and August. People practice and then there are lots of things going on. You can just go from building to building and hear different rehearsals going on of all kinds of things. It's very exciting, and wherever you walk you find other musicians--the whole place is just full of musicians. It's as if the whole world had suddenly become musicians! [laughter] It's a professional paradise, if it's allowed to be such. If it doesn't get grueling.

Crawford: Yes, always politics.

Imbrie: The politics get into it, always. Let's see, I'm looking at my list to see what hasn't been covered. Oh, Anthony Korf is a man who organizes concerts and he had a lot to do with the performance of my Requiem recently in New York which is going to be recorded. Mark Lehman is a freelance music critic, but he writes for a record magazine and he did the program notes. I never met him but I've had long correspondence with him.

McKim Fund Commissions

Imbrie: The McKim Commission from the Library of Congress, did I mention that?

Crawford: You only mentioned it, and I wanted to ask you what the library association was.

Imbrie: Well, the Library of Congress is the venue for this thing. There is some money for this commission and the proviso is that the original manuscript is to be deposited in the Library of Congress. That's the same with the Koussevitsky Foundation, by the way--my violin concerto's original manuscript is in the Library of Congress because that's the condition of this Koussevitsky Foundation.

My McKim Commission was to be a piece for violin and piano, which I have written but which has so far never been performed because although the original manuscript is already in the Library of Congress, I'm now working out who is going to play it. It may get its premiere performance at the Library of Congress. They have a concert hall there, a very nice concert hall which has just been renovated; the first performance is supposed to take place there and I'm now negotiating with performers that I'm interested in. I imagine it will probably be in a couple of years from now, whenever their schedules allow. They want me to choose the performers because since it's a national organization they don't want to pick the performers for fear of being accused of being partisan. So they will let me decide who plays it.

Crawford: Do you have artists in mind?

Imbrie: Yes, I certainly do. I don't want to go into that yet because it hasn't been decided.

Music Journals

Crawford: *Perspectives of New Music* is a professional magazine that you have written for and served on the board for. What are the best journals to write for?

Imbrie: *Perspectives of New Music* is a journal in which people write about all kinds of theoretical issues connecting with contemporary music. They write about their music or about

somebody else's or a lot of theorists and all that. That's the one that's most avant-garde, you might say. It's a platform for people with many different points of view and it was originally started, again, at Princeton. Now I think it's at the University of Washington--in Seattle they publish it. But it's been struggling along for years and years.

Crawford: What other ones do you try to keep up with?

Imbrie: Oh, I don't keep up with many. I keep up with *Nineteenth Century Music*, which is a thing that Joe Kerman started. It is a very good magazine about music of the nineteenth century, and some of it overlaps into the twentieth or back into the eighteenth century, but it's a very important journal and I keep up with that one. That's about all as far as music goes.

Thoughts on Evaluating One's Work

Crawford: I'm curious to know what a composer thinks about his own work as time evolves. I've heard you say that the First Symphony and the Violin Concerto have a special place in your heart.

Imbrie: Yes, well, it's funny. Some of them I haven't heard for a long time. Recently my friend made a CD out of some old tapes I had of old pieces and I listened to them again for the first time in years and it's a very strange experience to hear them again after many years. You forget certain details and you hear it almost with new ears.

I certainly recognize my own style and my own way of doing it and I recognize my own music. And some of these pieces I want to hear them again and see what I think about them. It doesn't come back right away.

Crawford: Are you surprised?

Imbrie: Sometimes in a way I'm a little surprised. I have to put it together in my head again because so many other things have been going on in my mind that I don't always come right back to it with a complete recognition. But what can I say--it's very difficult to talk about my work.

Crawford: The First and Second Symphonies you said reflected the sixties in some ways and were requested by Krips for the San Francisco Symphony but weren't commissions?

Imbrie: There weren't commissions, but he wanted a symphony, and in those days I was so delighted to be asked to write a symphony that I think I defrayed the expenses of copying the parts by asking for a research grant from the university. A composer could do that to have parts copied, and I got some of the funding for that, so I wasn't too much out of pocket. But I didn't get any money for doing it, I just had the opportunity to have it played, which was good enough for me in those days.

Crawford: You mentioned that was a time of great political ferment in the sixties, and that you thought the music reflected that at the time, but as you look back on it, you're not quite sure that it really did.

Imbrie: I think you can say that it did because that's what was going through your mind when you wrote it. The question is does it matter whether you know when you listen to it? Should I be thinking about the sixties or should I just be listening to the piece?

I think that's true of any music--you can talk about the circumstances under which any piece of music was written and what might have been going on in a composer's mind at the time, but ultimately you've got to judge it on its own merits. The whole question of the aesthetics of music, how much it really reflects of various thoughts and emotions is something that's been worrying people for centuries.

Crawford: There's a lot of talk about Shostakovitch now and what was going on and how it affected his music.

Imbrie: Well, perhaps that's a little bit more to the point because Shostakovitch was not allowed to write certain kinds of things that he might otherwise have wanted to write. He was under a regime that insisted that he write in a certain way and that's quite different from being allowed to write what you want to write and then telling somebody what you were thinking about when you wrote it.

Crawford: Part of that desire to know the composer's mind is the audience's attempt to get a grasp on the music.

Imbrie: Yes, and so you have to write program notes, and it's very difficult to write them in such a way that makes sense. There are all kinds of little private jokes that I will play on myself--I will put little quotes from something in a piece but I won't tell anybody about it because that's just for me, it's not for them. I want them to feel that whatever comes in that music belongs there for its own sake. If it's a quote, okay,

but it shouldn't matter that much, so I'm not going to mention it because if I mention it, then they'll think that's what the piece is all about, which it isn't. [laughter]

The Quartets

Crawford: Would you say something about the quartets more specifically--the progression from the First to the Fifth.

Imbrie: Well, the first was my senior thesis at Princeton, as I've said, and it was done very much under Roger Sessions' guidance. I remember certain passages in which he would say, "You know, this phrase isn't quite long enough; you need a little more expansion here." And sometimes I wouldn't realize it and then I'd realize that he was right. But it's really my music--he just guided me and showed me where the problems were and helped me a lot without inserting his own style, his own personality into it. And as I say, I wish I could do that more for my own students. That's what I'd like to be able to do. He helped me enormously and I still like the piece.

The Second Quartet was something that I wrote while I was already here at Berkeley. It was commissioned by a group, "Creative Concerts Guild" of Cambridge, Mass., and it's been performed here and elsewhere. All of them have been recorded somehow or another but most of the recordings are no longer available because they were on these old LPs.

Crawford: For the Third Quartet, the notes that I saw of the recording by the Walden Quartet were done by Roger Sessions.

Imbrie: Yes, he did the jacket liner notes.

Crawford: He talked a little bit about your use of twelve-tone technique. Want to comment about that?

Imbrie: I did try to use a twelve-tone technique for part of that piece but not all of it--just one movement of it. I just experimented with it, and I don't think it was all that noticeable, the fact that part of it is twelve-tone, part of it wasn't. I don't think it made that much difference because I'm a firm believer in the fact that the twelve-tone technique does not necessarily identify your style; that you can write a piece that sounds like a twelve-tone piece which isn't or you can write one which doesn't sound like a twelve-tone piece and is, you know. [laughter]

I was interested in it because it was very much in the air at that time. Lots of people were writing in it and I felt I ought to try it. And I found that I was perfectly able to do what I needed to do for the first movement and then for the other movements I just didn't use the twelve-tone technique.

The Third Quartet was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation. It was first performed by the Walden Quartet in Urbana, Illinois and that was because Paul Fromm was involved with that group and he sponsored it and it was his commission.

The Walden Quartet was the group that also recorded it. That's the piece in which I did use some Japanese effects. I knew I wanted to go to Japan, and I had been a Japanese translator during World War II, so I knew a little of the language--not as much as I would have liked. But I was curious as to what traditional Japanese music sounded like--just out of curiosity. I had listened to some records that I got from the library, to this traditional Japanese music.

In writing this quartet, I decided to try to get some of those effects and incorporate them into my own idiom, and so in one movement of the Third Quartet I played around with these effects and tried to get the string instruments to sound like kotos a little bit. In other words, I'd have one player pluck and then the other player would play the same note and do a glissando so as to get an effect as if you were playing a koto and doing a glissando which is so typical of the koto style. And that was fun for me. I was trying to incorporate it again, and I think that the first three or four notes of the row that I had used in the first movement I also used as the basis of this Japanese effect. It was a group of four notes which are very typical of the kind of scale that the Japanese used at that time. There's a certain kind of altered pentatonic scale. It's not just the regular black note pentatonic scale; it's slightly different. It has a very haunting effect which I love, and I tried to incorporate it into the piece, to use it in my own way and try to evoke it.

I remember later when I was in Japan, I played a recording of this piece for a Japanese composer, who was not very interested in American music and Western things, in general. He was very patriotic and I think he looked with certain suspicion on any Westerner at that point, but I did play him this recording, and he was very tolerant, very polite about it until it got to this passage and then he suddenly stood up and took notice when he heard this Japanese business. He said, "My God, what's going on here?" He couldn't believe that I was trying to do this.

Crawford: Was he honored?

Imbrie: Oh, I don't think so. I just think he was surprised. He lost his cool completely at that point. [laughter] I don't know whether he thought it worked or not or whether he thought it had anything to do with the rest of the piece. I hope that it is incorporated into the music in such a way that it does work.

Composers and Their Audiences

Crawford: You've said composers have to really be vigilant about trying to hear their work as the audience would, otherwise it turns into some kind of narcissism.

Imbrie: Yes, I've said that lots of times. My main belief as a teacher is that's the only way that I can function, any teacher can function. What would be the point of trying to teach somebody to do something if there was no communication? If the student isn't interested in communicating, then you can't communicate with him or her. It seems to me that music has to be thought of as a form of communication between one person and another, otherwise it is narcissistic because then you're just talking to yourself.

Crawford: A lot of new music is criticized on that level, of course.

Imbrie: Yes, but I think that every composer has to assume that somebody's going to meet him halfway and that he's got to meet them halfway--that's all. I've said that you have to put on your critic's hat sometimes as well as your composer's hat when you're writing. You have to say to yourself, "What would I think if I heard this for the first time and it had been written by somebody else?" You have to jump out of your own skin and hear it and try to pretend that you're somebody else listening to it and trying to make sense out of it. "Am I making myself clear?" is what you're saying as you're writing, just as when you're writing an essay or something, you have to change the wording because it isn't clear. You have to make it clear so that your idea gets through.

And what is that idea? Well, the idea is completely incorporated in the music, so it's harder than doing it with words because as you change a piece, it changes its content. As you change the notes, it changes the content but you have to somehow keep tweaking your idea until it makes the kind of

sense that you wanted it to make in the first place and it goes across the footlights.

I keep telling people it's like quoting Shakespeare--"To be or not to be, that's the question." You have to say, [with emphasis] "To be or not..." you have to do it like an actor. That's why I say a composer has to be a little like an actor. He has to not only form his ideas, but give them time to make their effect and make the phraseology clear enough, make the rhythm and the meter clear enough--all the other elements of the music have to coalesce into forming a significant thing that can project across the footlights and that people can receive in the same spirit that you communicated it in the first place.

Crawford: Are there certain works that are more successful in this light than others of your work?

Imbrie: There may be some which I can look back on and feel they were a little too complicated and something's going on here which I didn't quite get right. I think there are occasions when I felt that, but some of that could be the performance or sometimes a performer will make something less clear than you wanted it to be and you may not have been able to succeed in getting the performance just the way you wanted it. That's part of it, too. But usually I don't want a piece to be played unless I'm pretty satisfied that it's worked.

I've gone to rehearsals and realized that certain things aren't working right and I'll have to ask the performers to do something a little differently. I might have written certain dynamics down and then realized they weren't going to work. I found I did that with these songs with the San Francisco Girls Chorus.

Songs of Then and Now

Crawford: Let's talk about the songs--*Songs of Then and Now*, just performed for the first time last week.

Imbrie: There were some places where the balance wasn't right. You couldn't hear the words where the instruments were too loud or where the singers didn't start their crescendo quite soon enough--little things like that can make a lot of difference in how the piece is understood. And you do the best you can but I have to admit that after all these years of experience I still

realize that there are times when I've miscalculated something and I have to clarify it.

And very often you can do that in rehearsal. I go home after a rehearsal and I write down all the things that I think need fixing. Some of them are the fault of the performers and some of them are my fault and I have to admit that some of them are my fault. And so I make a list of things that need adjusting and I give it to the conductor and then they try to work it out. So you do your best. That's all I can say--both in composing and in preparing the performers you do the best you can.

Crawford: I was interested that when the conductor, Nicole Paiement, was pulling out images for the several hundred children listening to this rehearsal of the songs; she wanted them to listen for images of water, for example, and you indicated that you wanted the children to look for "line."

Imbrie: Yes, I said that because I think that there's too much emphasis given to imitating nature. This was the whole aesthetic during the eighteenth century, during the Galant Period. There was a lot of discussion amongst theoreticians of that time about what is music, how does it work? Is it the imitation of nature? Are we painting little pictures and all that? There had been a lot of argument on that back in those days and there still is. There is a lot of feeling that the best way to approach music is to pretend that it's painting a picture or something, especially in song.

You write songs and the music is supposed to illustrate every detail. The details that you mention in the poem that you're setting to music have got to somehow be reflected literally in the music. So if you're writing about rain or snow, you've got to have a scale going down and if you're writing about ice, you've got to have something very, very cold. Up to a point you can do that--up to a point--but I think that that is something that can get out of control and so I keep saying the important thing is the line. The important thing is where is it going and where has it been. You can put in decorative detail that might refer to something in the text, but if you overdue it, it becomes Mickey Mouse, you know. And you don't want Mickey Mouse, you want the flow of the whole poem to be reflected in the flow of the music, and that's much more important than little details. So even with children I think you can make that point.

A simile you can use is that of breathing, which is really what it's all about. You have to breathe between sentences. I think the fact that music has phrases is reflective directly of the fact that we have to breathe when we say something. Even though in music you're not saying anything, you're singing it. But dancing and singing are the basis of all of it, and that's more important than little images that you may have. The little images may be something that will help give you a specific quality to a phrase; it'll give a specific color to it or a specific quality, as long as you know how much of it you need and how much you don't need.

Crawford: In keeping with that, I wanted to ask you about your composing environment when you're working on a piece. What do you need?

Imbrie: Well, I need the right poems, first of all, and it took me a long time to make the decision as to which texts to use and in what order.

Of course I had realized that I was writing for a particular group of young ladies who have just become ladies. [The San Francisco Girls Chorus] They are no longer little girls, and they may remember their past as children very vividly, but they're also realizing what it means to be an adult and trying to imagine what the rest of their life is going to be like. They're at that interesting point when they're suddenly contemplating the whole world opening out before them as adults and so I tried to pick poems that would give various aspects of this experience and that would balance one another. That was tricky but I think I picked the right poems in the right way. And I think it was very important to have a centerpiece like that e. e. cummings one in the middle.

It is funny verse; the use of words is very unconventional, to say the least. Nevertheless, I think it has a direct impact once you catch on to what the unconventional language is all about, when you realize that *anyone* and *no one* for example are a man and a woman. So whenever he uses the word *anyone* he's talking about the man, whenever he uses the word *no one* he's talking about the woman. Once you realize that, you can understand the poem perfectly well. It takes a while to figure it out.

Crawford: That's an attention-getter, isn't it?

Imbrie: Yes, it's an attention-getter, and he has a marvelous way of handling the language, using simple words in an unconventional way. As a composer, I find setting simple words is much more fun than setting very complex abstract words, like

antidisestablishmentarianistically, or something like that, you know. [laughter]

Crawford: The Shakespeare is rather simple, too, isn't it?

Imbrie: Yes, he used words that have a direct conversational tone to them. You can imagine them being sung. If you try to set a scientific dissertation to music, it would be really difficult.

Crawford: You chose ones from *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*.

Imbrie: Two of them were from *The Tempest* and the other was from *As You Like It*.

Crawford: The *Tempest* text has a very sobering message, doesn't it?

Imbrie: You mean, "Full Fathom Five?" It suggests the idea of death, and some kind of magical transformation. "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" is from *As You Like It*. It is also sobering, if you like. My use of it was connected with the idea that there is a time when you suddenly realize that everybody isn't as nice as you might have thought they were.

The one that precedes that is an e. e. cummings poem which is a fantasy of how everything is just wonderful. Everybody's in love and the flowers pick themselves and you're up in a balloon and you're going to some wonderful place that nobody's ever been before. You have all these wonderful images of complete happiness and so I wanted to contrast that with suddenly realizing things aren't as great as you thought, things you have to deal with as you become an adult. So I was just thinking all the way through of how these various images might appeal to people of that age, even though you have to think about it a little bit.

Crawford: And so that is directed toward young people from thirteen through seventeen?

Imbrie: Yes, I wanted those so that they would feel some identification with the text, so that they weren't just being taught to sing some abstruse text that they couldn't relate to. I wanted something that if they thought about it at all that they would relate to it as individuals.

Crawford: They were right there.

Imbrie: Well, they certainly sounded as if they were. They were well trained and they were really good.

The Composing Routine

Crawford: When you're writing are there times of the day when you routinely write when you don't want interruptions?

Imbrie: I write during the day. I remember when I was younger, when I was writing my First Quartet I had no trouble writing at night after dinner until eleven o'clock. I had lots of energy in those days, but I find now I just don't have the concentration after dinner. I feel like relaxing and reading a book or watching TV or just doing something very relaxing. I find that I work best in the morning and in the afternoons. If possible, I can get going and spend a whole day at it, just stopping for lunch or at least a whole morning or a whole afternoon. I'll try to get a lot of unbroken time for that purpose.

Crawford: Was this room always your composing study?

Imbrie: Yes. We've been living in the house since the late fifties, and we added this studio in '69.

I've been using it as my studio for work and also I've done some teaching in here. I have students come here for lessons occasionally. When I was teaching at the conservatory, I usually had two or three or four students from the conservatory, and they would come here one day a week for a lesson, so I've done a lot of teaching here as well as composing.

Crawford: In Roy Harris' memoirs he said he sometimes liked to have his wife reading to him and his children playing close by while was composing.

Imbrie: Well, I used to compose in the little basement room we have in the house. We call it the old studio because I used to have my piano down there before we built this. And that was when the kids were little and I would hear them clunking around upstairs in the kitchen. They had a little toy that they pushed along the ground that used to ring a bell as it went: a-ding-a-ding-a-ding-a-ding. [laughter] So I would hear these noises up there but it didn't bother me. As long as they weren't in the same room and as long as I knew that Barbara was in charge, I didn't worry. I just sort of enjoyed that.

Crawford: So they were a presence, too.

Imbrie: Yes, they were a presence sometimes.

Crawford: How about friends and books and so on when you're composing? Do you just shut out the world insofar as possible?

Imbrie: Well, no, if you have an appointment, you have to meet it. And of course when I was teaching most of my career, I was teaching on campus three days a week. Sometimes I would have to go for a committee meeting or something on other days, and I'd have to go home and I'd have to correct harmony papers or counterpoint papers or fugue papers or whatever analysis papers, so I spent a lot of time doing school work here and there.

But I had to budget my time so that I'd have time for composition if I was working on a commission or something which had a deadline. I would simply have to allow time for it. And sometimes it would be necessary to tell people that I couldn't serve on this committee or I couldn't do this because I had a deadline. And then later on if another composer in the department had a similar problem, I would be willing to take over some of those extra jobs of his so that he could have more time. So we could work it out. But when it came to writing the opera, of course, that was different.

Crawford: You took two years off for *Angle of Repose*.

Imbrie: I had to take two years off and then I spent every day all day on it for two years, essentially. It took me a year and a half to write the music and it took me another three months to do the orchestration. It was a major undertaking, and I just couldn't do anything else.

Crawford: Are you at rest now having premiered the songs two weeks ago?

Imbrie: I'm not working on anything at the moment, and I haven't got any big commissions on the way. The only unfinished business is that piece for violin and piano at the Library of Congress which has never been performed and I've got to work that out.

And then there is an upcoming premiere of a piano quartet which I wrote for a group in Minnesota. Bonnie and Nate--Bonnie Hampton and Nathan Schwartz--are two of the performers involved in that and the others are a violinist that I knew at Sandpoint and a violist from the ProArte Quartet. [Because of Nate's illness, the performance will be postponed until the spring of 2000. A new cellist and pianist have been found. I am happy to say that Nate now seems to be slowly recovering.] I sent the music to the performers, so the commission has been fulfilled. I'll be waiting until rehearsals and the performance of that, but that's all. So I'm taking a little breather at this moment.

I've been composing quite constantly and steadily through the last several years and I feel it's kind of nice to relax for a while, but I know that very soon I'll be getting very antsy if I don't get back to composing again. Funny thing about being a composer is that you never feel rested because if you relax for a moment and you don't compose, then you begin to feel guilty because you're not composing. It's one of these--I don't know what you call it. What is the word that you use in such circumstances--it's something that you have to do.

Crawford: It's a compulsion.

Imbrie: Compulsion. It's a compulsion. Yes, you have to do it.

Crawford: Are you at ease simply working on it in your mind?

Imbrie: Well, I used be a pianist once upon a time [laughter] and as I've said, I enjoy punching the keys and making noise. That stimulates me and I tend to do my work at the piano. Other people can't see it that way. I know that Roger Sessions could never understand that because although he played the piano quite well, he was not really a pianist. He just worked at his desk, just wrote music down on paper and would revise and would make sketches and all that. He would sometimes check something at the piano, but very seldom, and I think he disapproved, in a sense, of anyone who couldn't do it away from the piano, as if somehow your ear was defective. But I find that the piano stimulates my imagination, just the vividness of the sound, and I like to change things and see what it sounds like. Although I would have known what it would have sounded like, I just enjoy the actual contact of the keyboard, the physical contact.

But I do have absolute pitch. I can hear away from the piano. I can look at a score and imagine what it sounds like, but it's just much more fun to work it out.

Crawford: Is absolute pitch relative to any given--for instance, to your instrument in any way?

Imbrie: Well, that's a good question, because most American orchestras and pianos are tuned to 440. The note A is 440. But there are many European and other orchestras which are a little different from that, and so now you turn on your car radio and you listen to recordings from all over the world--from Europe, in particular, and some of them are not tuned quite to 440. I discovered that sometimes my sense of pitch is a little endangered by this. I think I know what key it's in and I realize they're tuned a little differently. It just drives you

crazy. [sings a note, then plays it on the piano] See, that's a little flat.

Crawford: Yes. Would it confuse you to go to another instrument--

Imbrie: Well, most pianos in this country are tuned to 440 so it wouldn't matter.

Crawford: It wouldn't, but if it were tuned differently--

Imbrie: Yes, it's very weird. I've played on some of these old fashioned pianos--I don't know whether they are forte-pianos or whether they're harpsichords or some instruments which are tuned a little differently for one reason or another. I believe in the old days--a few centuries ago--there was no standard pitch and each orchestra would tune up according to its own desire, and I imagine that that would have been very confusing.

VII THE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SCENE; COMMUNICATION AND PROCESS

Shostakovich and Others

Crawford: In our final interview I thought we could talk further about your music, even though you've said that describing one's music is like describing the way one walks.

Imbrie: We've talked about certain principles of composition. After all, I do have to teach, and I have to make certain things clear verbally to other people, and so it's not so much describing my style in detail as it would be simply saying certain things that I think are important and then leave it at that. But you go ahead and ask the questions.

Crawford: One word that occurs quite often when your music is being written about is "integrity".

Imbrie: Well, that's nice. I hope it's positive and not negative. [laughs] What I hope they mean is that there's an awful lot of music being written in which you don't feel that the composer is really taking his job seriously, that he's trying to wow the audience or he's trying to be tricky, or trying to be stylish, or trying to be up to date; so what I hope they mean is that my music tries to be just what it is--it simply tries to be honest and straightforward, even if it's complex. It's still not trying to pull the wool over anybody's eyes or anything like that. I imagine that's the sort of thing they mean. I hope.

Crawford: Your music is said to be "post-Schoenbergian".

Imbrie: I think that's a historical thing. Schoenberg, of course, is best known for introducing the twelve-tone technique, which I don't need to describe. But post-Schoenbergian means those who are fascinated by Schoenberg's music, some of whom still use the twelve-tone technique and others like myself who have tried it and find that it works all right, but I don't feel that I

need to use it and so I don't use it very much. In fact, I haven't used it really for a long time.

But I do think all of our music is very much indebted to what Schoenberg did. He was the one who showed us that you could write in a chromatic idiom and still make sense musically. And so the words "post-Schoenbergian" mean somebody who writes in a chromatic idiom, with or without the twelve-tone technique, as opposed to someone who is trying to be very simple and diatonic and trying to be postmodern or something like that.

Crawford: Do you feel that it's important to expose young composers to that part of the Western tradition?

Imbrie: Oh, I think they should know what's going on. In fact, the Ph.D. program at Berkeley involves having the students study--at least it used to--they had to study nine or ten contemporary works of different kinds. Then they would be asked questions about these works. They had to be prepared to analyze them, and they would. The student could pick some of the works and the faculty would pick others, and so the idea was to make sure that the students had a broad knowledge of what was going on in the twentieth century.

That is very important, that people shouldn't shut their minds to things. I think they should know what's going on, and then they will find their own style, if you want to call it that. We all go through an identity crisis, as I believe I said before, and you have to get through that by just knowing what's going on. Eventually you will allow certain things to influence you because they appeal to you, and you will be influenced by them whether you know it or not. Even if you're not trying to be influenced by it, you will be influenced by it.

Crawford: Does this happen to you?

Imbrie: Sometimes I'll hear a piece and say, "Hey, that's pretty good. I see what he's doing. Maybe I ought to try something like that," but I wouldn't want to just imitate. I realize there are certain kinds of things one can do that one could adapt to one's own purposes. It might turn out sounding quite different.

Did I tell you that story about the time that the Russians came to visit us? The Russian composers, including Shostakovich and others came to Berkeley back in the fifties and we had a meeting together, and one of the composers--one of

the Russian composers, not Shostakovich, but Kabalevsky, I believe it was--had heard some of my music before. I was very flattered at this. It was my first quartet, I think, that I'd written very many years before, and he was very complimentary about it.

Then we had a concert, or we had a meeting with all the students at Hertz Hall, in which we played some of our recordings, and at this point that composer got up and said, in Russian this time, with a translator, instead of in English: "I heard your First Quartet and I was very much impressed, but now I've heard this more recent piece"--I think it was the Violin Concerto--"and I think that you have been tempted by all this decadent Western stuff." And he said, "Music must come from the heart." And that was the end of it.

So I had to think of something to respond to that and I had this image of these composers who were brought up before the Politburo in Russia where they were scolded and told they should write other kinds of music and all they could do was to confess their sins and say they were going to change, and so I started out that way and said, "You know, you're absolutely right. I am tempted, but the temptation comes from the heart." [laughter]

Well, the students kind of got a kick out of that, I must say. I had to come up with something; I just couldn't say, "You're wrong," or something like that.

Well, he gave me a dirty look when I said that. He didn't say anything else. What he thought was that the First Quartet, you see, was simpler in style and the Violin Concerto was much too chromatic and too dissonant.

Crawford: It's so lyrical, I think.

Imbrie: Well, sure, it was intended to be lyrical, but I think he was trying to make a point of some sort. There was another man there that was kind of looking out for these guys and I think they knew that if they didn't say something, they'd be reported back to the home front.

Crawford: What did Shostakovich say?

Imbrie: Oh, he didn't say anything. Shostakovich was the most nervous man I've ever met in my life. He seemed very tense. He was perfectly nice but I had the feeling that he was very nervous about the whole thing. I don't know, I imagine he must have had a terrible time because of the fact that the political

situation was such that he was expected to do certain kinds of things and I don't think he was able to say anything.

That was in the fifties sometime, at The Faculty Club. We had lunch at The Faculty Club and then we went over to Hertz Hall. Well, it was after the opening of Hertz Hall, and that was opened in '58, so it might have been the early sixties or the late fifties sometime.

Crawford: Is there something like that today at Berkeley?

Imbrie: No, this was a very special occasion because these Russian composers were taking a trip through the United States. They were stopping at various campuses and trying to assess what the educational system was like in America. It was partly a publicity thing and so they got it up especially.

Music and Communication; More about the Quartets and the First Symphony

Crawford: I wish it had been recorded. Well, let's go on. The next reference comes from liner notes: "Although a university composer by background and temperament, Mr. Imbrie obviously thinks music is an expressive, communicative art--certainly a welcome attitude at a time when much of new music that emanates from campuses seems aimed at small select audiences of peers."

Imbrie: Well, it was very nice that they said that. Of course I think music is an expressive art, but many other university composers think so, too. I do think, as I've said before, that the composer and the listener have to meet each other halfway, and it's a question of how much you will demand of your listener. I believe it ought to be possible not to talk down to your listener, but just to say what you have to say. The music can be complex, but by the use of adequate phrasing, adequate motivic clarity and all these other things, you ought to be able to make an impact on the listener if he's willing to listen and not daydream. If he thinks of music as just something to accompany his daydreams, then he's not going to understand it. Some listeners don't want to be challenged in this way. They want something that's very familiar and so they think that anything that isn't familiar is therefore not "expressive."

Crawford: Are there works that you would single out as being more communicative than others?

Imbrie: I hope that all are communicative, but of course some are simpler than others. Like the piece for the girls chorus, for example. I was thinking of teenagers and the need for them to be able to sing this thing, to keep it fairly open. That is as simple as I can get without being something totally different.

In the past I've written pop tunes in the Gershwin style for friends and all that, and of course there you're simply imitating a very wonderful style from Gershwin and Cole Porter and people of that sort. But that's not what I consider my own music. I enjoy doing it, but I wouldn't ever try to put that in my catalogue as one of my publications.

When I write my own music, I try to be myself and not imitate somebody else. Some pieces are easier than others. I think some of them, for example my late quartets, are perhaps more complex than certain other pieces I've written.

Crawford: The American Record Guide described the Second Quartet as "reserved and uncommon," and the Third as "outgoing and fully formed," almost as if they were talking about personalities.

Imbrie: That seems very strange because I think the Third Quartet is much more complex and complicated than the Second one.

I don't know what it means exactly, because the Second Quartet always seemed to me to be much more immediate. I used certain effects in the second movement where I have sort of a march-like thing. It's a sort of a travesty on having to march in the army, you know, and there are little bugle calls and things like that--or imitation bugle calls. So I would think of the Second Quartet as something much more immediately approachable than the Third Quartet. And as we have discussed, the Third is the one in which the first movement is written in the twelve-tone technique, and it does have the Japanese effects in the last movement, as I recall.

Crawford: Yes, we talked about that. I just wondered about the idea of personality in music.

Imbrie: Well, I do think that different pieces have different personalities, if you like. If you look at Beethoven symphonies or quartets, certainly each one has a certain personality. The *Pastoral* Symphony seems to me to be very different from the Fifth Symphony. It amazes me to know that Beethoven wrote both of those pieces simultaneously. He was working on both of them at the same time, which is something that's hard for me to believe. They were apparently premiered on the same concert and yet, they're absolutely totally

different. I think he was trying to create certain kinds of atmosphere in each piece which was different from the other.

We all try to write individual pieces that aren't just clones of other pieces we've written, and I think the pieces we write tend to take on their own character. At least for me--I don't plan this in advance, but for any piece that I'm writing, it begins to take on its own character as I go along. I realize that there are certain problems that I have to solve and the way I solve them influences the impact the piece will have.

For instance, the First Symphony--I'd like to talk about that for a minute. I had the idea, this was kind of an abstract idea, and all abstract ideas usually become concrete very quickly when you try to do something with them. I thought it would be nice to have the exposition in sort of sonata form, except not in triadic tonality, but I thought it would be nice to make my statement very, very loud and very complex and getting more and more exciting. Then it would reach a certain culmination and then everything would collapse and the development section would then would have to pick up the pieces. You see, this is different from the way a standard traditional sonata form would work. The development section would gradually have to pull itself together and begin to add more and more materials until finally it worked itself up to the place where it could come back to the recapitulation again --and this is very different from a classical sonata form.

I found, when I was actually working on it, that the so-called exposition had to have a contrasting theme which was a little more lyrical, and therefore it wasn't just a straight upward surge. It had to have a little moment of breather, it had to have a nice little oboe tune or something. But then it got to be more exciting again and it got speeded up, and pretty soon it reaches this big climax. There's a tremendous crash, and the whole thing collapses.

Then you have these hesitant things going on, little by little; lots of silences, and lots of little tentative things. These little tentative things begin to get together and begin to work up towards something, but I realized it couldn't be just a straight line going back up to the original excitement again. It itself had to have its own shape, it couldn't be just a straight line, because that would be too literal. And so I found that I would get up to a certain point and then I'd have to collapse again, but not quite as much as I had the first time. Then I had to get faster, and faster, and funnier, and finally reach the big culmination where the first theme

comes back. And this time the little oboe theme which I had used in the exposition insisted on expanding and becoming much more important than it had been before.

The end of the first movement didn't satisfy me until I had really exploited all the lyrical possibilities of that tune which had not been exploited in the exposition at all. The proportions are completely different from what they would be in standard classical sonata form, so what I'm saying is the principle of sonata form is something that I think is still valid even if you don't have tonality, but the principle is that you say something and then you have to say something that will contradict it or will show up as an opposite, and then you have to reconcile the opposites. That's what sonata form really is. The way you do it depends on the material that you're using. I don't know of any two Beethoven expositions that are identical in shape and, of course, Beethoven didn't know the word sonata form.

It's the idea of contrasting materials and how to reconcile them. That's really what it's all about. And so you can say it's an abstract thing, but it becomes very unabstract when you're actually working with the materials and trying to make it work. Each piece you do has to have its own character which derives from your sense of what the materials need and what they mean.

Crawford: And that develops as you progress.

Imbrie: It develops as I work. Now, other people don't do it that way. I know composers like Elliott Carter who are like architects: they have an architectural blueprint in which everything is decided in advance and then you fill in the details. He has a wonderful imagination for amazing kinds of formal devices, but I can't do that that way; it's not my way of working. I'm not saying that I'm right and he's wrong, I'm just saying that I can't do it that way. I have to get my hands dirty with the materials and they have to tell me what to do as much as I tell them what to do. When I say that they tell me what to do, I mean that I have a hunch that there's so much energy in this that it needs expansion or that it only needs to be mentioned a little bit, just so people will remember it, and then you can take it off and do it again later. You have to feel what's going to work and what isn't. I don't think there are any rules. The music has to tell you. You have to tell it and it has to tell you.

The Influence of Jazz

Crawford: What does being "American" imply? Here's another quotation: "Mr. Imbrie is profoundly American: alive to the electricity of jazz, and to the optimism and uncertainties of the American century." This is from Mark Lehman's notes, I believe.

Imbrie: Yes, well, he's always been a proponent of my music. I have never met him, but I've had correspondence with him over a long period and he's always been very supportive of my music. And I think he writes very well.

Crawford: It was "profoundly American" that I was trying to get a purchase on.

Imbrie: Well, again, what do they mean by American? [laughter] I think what he was saying was that there's a certain elemental influence of jazz there. That's true--jazz has an influence on many American composers. Some of them want to make their music intentionally like jazz, and there will be crossovers and people who write music that is really jazz. There are all shades of difference between jazz and classical, if you want to call it that.

In my case, jazz has had an influence on me in that the kind of rhythmic quality that it has is something I can't avoid. It's just part of the air I breathe, if you like. I don't feel this way about rock music at all because I guess I'm too old to appreciate that. It seems to me to be of very little interest, and although there are experts who claim there are very many different styles of rock music and that I should really know it better and all that, they may be right, but I find that jazz does excite me in a way that rock music doesn't.

Crawford: Do you hear jazz, and is your exposure to jazz great?

Imbrie: Well, I don't know the names of the famous jazz musicians except for some of the few that are household words, but I turn on the jazz station in my car when I'm driving around very often when the classical station is playing Vivaldi or Tchaikovsky or something I don't want to hear. [laughter]

Crawford: Which is often!

Imbrie: Yes, so I'll see what's going on on the jazz station. And it's wonderful stuff. It really is. It has its own limitations, but I find it's very full of ideas and full of freedom. The basic structure is very rigid--that's the only thing. The

basic phrase structure is very rigid but I find the way in which the improvisation takes place over this rigid structure is fascinating. And it's not that I want to copy it or imitate it, it's just that it's part of the air I breathe. We're all influenced by everything we hear.

So there is some there. It's not on the surface, except in one case. I have to say there's one case where I have definitely tried to bring up the image of jazz and that's in a piece called *Spring Fever*, which was a fairly recent piece. It's a piece for ten instruments, and was done in Boston in May, 1997, and the ten instruments include percussion, double bass, piano, and some strings and winds.

In the last movement I have a kind of an exposition which then broadens out and disappears. And then I start with a double bass pizzicato and in the percussion I bring in a thing called high hat, which is the sort of thing they use in jazz a lot.

Then I have each instrument, or a group of instruments, do a little solo. I don't have them improvise; I write it out for them. And then at the end they come back with the first theme again--everyone playing it together just they way they would in jazz arrangement, where each instrument does a riff and then gets applause, you know, and then the next one gets a riff, and then finally they come back with the original tune in its original form which everybody plays together. So I used that, I consciously used that device in the last movement of *Spring Fever* because I was interested in constantly referring to a jazz idiom but doing it in my own idiom.

Awards and Panels

Crawford: It sounds delightful. Well, let me ask you what you consider the highest praise a composer can have, speaking of verbal description and so on?

Imbrie: Oh, I don't know. We're all very easily flattered if anybody says anything nice, you know. [laughter] No, I think that somebody like the critic that you were just talking about--the one from Cincinnati--Mark Lehman. I feel very flattered because I don't know him personally and he just published these reviews of my recordings totally without any influence. He wasn't trying to please me or it wasn't as if he'd been a student of mine and felt he ought to say something nice. He

was totally independent and he came to these conclusions and said the kinds of things that I would have been very pleased to have anyone say without having been told what to say or anything like that. I think it's the attitude of a person who has no axe to grind, saying something like that that is very flattering.

Crawford: A couple of questions about Nadia Boulanger: something I came across in the book of Sessions' letters was a letter from a young composer named David Diamond who I gather was in Paris at the same time you were?

Imbrie: David Diamond. He's a quite a well-known composer in New York these days. I must say I haven't kept up with him very much. He was a few years older than I, but he was at Fontainebleau the same time I was. He was one of the ones who had studied with Sessions, and he was one who apparently thought very highly of him and encouraged me by all means to go and study with him, although I knew about him already, because I lived in Princeton and I was planning to study with him anyway. But I remember that David Diamond was there.

Later on he had a kind of falling out with Sessions, but it was a very complex relationship apparently--according to Sessions' own notes and what I've read in various biographies.

Crawford: In the letter I'm referring to he sounded very envious of you. He said, "Nadia Boulanger," he was writing this to Sessions, "wanted to keep you," was the way he put it. The implication was she didn't want to keep David Diamond as a student.

Imbrie: Oh, that seems very strange to me because he was much more advanced than I at that time. I was just a beginner and he was several years older and he was writing much more sophisticated things than I. He might have all kinds of reasons for saying these things; he is one of these very emotional guys. I wouldn't take it at face value. [laughter]

Crawford: What was the importance of studying with Nadia Boulanger? Why did so many Americans find their way to her?

Imbrie: According to Vivian Perlis's article in the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*: "After Copland...and Virgil Thomson 'discovered' her in 1921, hundreds of Americans went to France to study with her." She convinced Damrosch and Koussevitsky to commission Copland's *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra*, which she performed in 1924. Her reputation spread rapidly among Americans and her influence was great.

Crawford: We have talked about various awards that you have won. Are there others?

Imbrie: Well, I'd have to look them up. [laughter] The Alice M. Ditson Award is the one I had when I came to study with Sessions after I got out of the army. I came here for my master's degree, and that's from Columbia University.

The Guggenheim fellowships--the first time I went to Rome and the second time I went to Tokyo, the reason being, of course, that I'd studied Japanese during World War II. This was an opportunity to get to Japan and see what it was like, and so I spent that year in Japan on the Guggenheim.

Crawford: And those are very free-wheeling awards, aren't they?

Imbrie: Yes. Yes, well you have to apply. And I've made many recommendations for Guggenheims and my batting average was not so good, except this year my batting average got better: two of the people I recommended got Guggenheims!

Crawford: Good! You had made that comment earlier.

Imbrie: No, I have to change it because this time two people I recommended got Guggenheims and so I feel a lot better about it than I did last time.

Crawford: What was the basis of your recommendation?

Imbrie: Well, they're different. I mean, each composer had different qualities. I don't want to fit them into any category--it was just that both of them had been students of mine. I liked both of their music for very different reasons. Their music is very different from one another's, but I felt they were both very worthy. Each year I have to make several. The applicants have to get these recommendations from various people and so they ask me. Usually there are five or six letters each year and so if two of them got them, I feel that's a good batting average--the best I've ever had because in the past I've gone for years with none of them getting them.

Crawford: Will you recommend almost anyone who's interested?

Imbrie: Well, I think that if they feel that you are supportive of them, then they will ask you to recommend them. These things are a little touchy. I hate to say no, but on the other hand I don't think many people would ask me to do it if they didn't think I was going to say yes.

I don't think I've ever said no, but I've never been in a situation where I really wanted to say no. Sometimes I had qualifications. They often ask you to rank your candidates and I usually can't rank them 1-2-3-4-5-6, whatever. I usually rank them as the first four are the best and then the next two are pretty good, but they are probably not quite in the same league as the first. Something like that. This time I think I recommended five and there was one that I thought was very good but I felt needed to wait a little longer, and so I said, "You might be better if you just didn't do it quite right away," and allowed that person to expand.

The Brandeis University award was in '58. They give two awards each year: one to an established composer which is just an honorary award, and one to a young composer which has some money attached to it. Roger Sessions and I got the award at the same time, and he was sore and he said, "Why don't I get the money?" I hope he was kidding. [laughter]

Then in 1969 I was elected to membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters, which is now identical with the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The membership includes painters and sculptors and literary people and composers. The advantage of being a member is that you can give out awards to people in your field. You're on the panel for three years running. I'm on the panel right now, as a matter of fact, for the first time in several years, so I'll be on for next year and the year after and then I'll be off again. They rotate, and these panels are made up of six or seven members who look at all the scores and then give awards of various kinds.

Some are scholarships and some are recording grants and some are just stipends or something of that kind. It takes about two days and you look through about 100 manuscripts and you listen to snatches of things on tape. You can't listen to the entire thing or you'd be there forever, and so you have to rifle through the scores and you discuss people. It's a lot of work, but it's very helpful because it does encourage younger people in the arts and it's something they can put on their forms when they're looking for a job. They can say, I got such and such an award.

Crawford: Oh, it's a substantial award.

Imbrie: It's a big thing for their career, and to have a subsidized recording or something like that is very important. So I feel very good about being able to help out with that.

A Composer's Frustrations; A Conservative Backlash and Postmodernism

Crawford: As a composer what have been the major frustrations for you?

Imbrie: Well, I think it's the same thing everybody would say. It's the difficulty of getting major works performed by major organizations.

In the past I've been very fortunate in some ways because, for example, when Josef Krips came to the San Francisco Symphony he had Jacob Krachmalnik, who at that time was the first violinist, and he knew my Violin Concerto. It had already been done at Berkeley and he did it under Krips in San Francisco. Then we got together after the concert at a restaurant and Krips said, "Now I want you to write me a symphony." I've told you I think that he didn't pay me for it, there was no commission--but I was so delighted that Krips had asked me to write a symphony that I wrote the First Symphony.

He performed it and asked for another one and I wrote the second one. And I wasn't paid a cent for this. I was writing a third one for him and he was quite ill and resigned. He died shortly after that, so the Third Symphony was never performed by the San Francisco Symphony. It was ultimately performed in England by the Halle Orchestra in Manchester. Then it was recorded by the London Symphony under Farberman.

So this was an unusual situation, but large orchestral works are very difficult to get performed. And as I told you before, the only way I got the Violin Concerto performed was because we were opening a new music building.

Crawford: You've mentioned that you think there's a kind of conservative backlash these days.

Imbrie: Yes, I think today there are a lot of people who are now talking about postmodernism. I think it is a kind of backlash, this emphasis on repetition and kind of a static music in which things change very very slowly. There's a great deal of interest in color for its own sake, and I have no objection to color--I like things to be colorful--but I don't want to sacrifice line and rhythmic variety and motivic development and all these other things that are so much fun to work with. I think there are a lot of people who are reacting against the complexity of contemporary music, which it is; it is complex.

My own feeling has always been it would be nice if it could be as complex as you want it to be but somehow you can make it clear by just being sure that everything is absolutely understandable by someone who really wants to listen. But that's not good enough for some people; they want things to be radically simplified.

So I think there's a lot of that going on, and if you ask about frustration I think that's the sense that one has today--many people do want things to be simplified, so that you have to go to these little chamber music concerts to hear each other's music.

Crawford: We have talked about the fact that even our symphony has diminished the contemporary music program it had under John Adams and others.

Imbrie: Well, Michael Tilson Thomas does a few little modern pieces but he does it in order to make people giggle a little bit. He picks stuff very often that is fairly inconsequential and fairly titillating, but it's not serious. De Waart was good about that and Krips and Jorda were very interested in what was going on here with the local composers. So I kind of miss those guys.

The Music Scene Today

Crawford: I would like to know what you take from other composers? By that I mean is there a society of composers--I see many composers at the Contemporary Music Players concerts, for instance. Are you talking to other composers routinely and do you seek that kind of company?

Imbrie: Yes, well, there are various organizations that give concerts, as you must know. San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, there's the Earplay group, there's Composers Incorporated and the various other little groups of people who are putting on music that they're interested in. They have different agendas and different interests. I go to as many of these things as I can, and that's where I see my colleagues.

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players is probably the best funded of the whole. They do more ambitious things. They seem to get good audiences, and they have a wide variety of styles, and though some of the music they play doesn't

interest me very much, other things do. I'm always interested to see what they come up with.

And then there are the other groups that have their own particular outlooks on things, and they all go to each other's concerts. I think there's a good atmosphere. It is a little like our old Composer's Forum. It's that same sort of thing, only there are several such groups now. There are others that I haven't mentioned and there are others in other cities and so forth.

Crawford: Are they fairly diverse?

Imbrie: Oh, I think so. There are those who just won't do anything but what they themselves like and they won't pay attention to anything else. I don't think it's as bad as it was, as I said before, back in the time when I was first moving to California, when you had the Schoenberg disciples and the Copland disciples.

Crawford: That's what I was getting at.

Imbrie: I think there's still some of that. As I just said a moment ago, there are people who go into this postmodern enclave, and some of the them are very popular; some of them have made a lot of money and made a big splash, and yet, one can still talk to these people. They're not enemies, really.

Crawford: I recall a concert a few months ago when David Del Tredici premiered some songs and he was roundly criticized for being so romantic.

Imbrie: Well, if it were really romantic it wouldn't be so bad. [laughter] I didn't think it was all that romantic. I knew David Del Tredici quite well because he was a student at Cal. In fact, he was in my undergraduate harmony class. He was a student of mine at that level, and a very talented pianist and a very talented composer. I think recently he's been getting more and more into this sort of simplistic type of music, and it's too bad because the guy has a lot of talents. I know he's very successful and some of these people are.

Crawford: What do you think is promoting this shift to neo-whatever it is?

Imbrie: Well, I think it appeals to a larger public. They don't have to concentrate so much. I don't know how he feels. I would give him the benefit of the doubt and say that this is really what he wants to do; this is really the way he does it.

I think there are a lot of people who have dabbled in more complex things and just decided they prefer to do it this way. It isn't necessarily just that he's trying to make a lot of money or anything like that; I think it's genuine form of expression. I'll give him credit for that.

Crawford: Well, when you are working, where do you seek relief from composing?

Imbrie: [laughter] Well, it's almost the opposite right now. I'm not composing right now and I'm feeling very anxious. I'm feeling very nervous because I'm not doing anything at the moment. I've got to start composing again. The funny thing about it for me, and I think a lot of other composers will tell you the same thing, is that you have to compose or you feel that if you're not composing, somehow what are you doing on this planet anyway? I think it's a kind of a necessity. So I've got to get busy and start on something--

Crawford: Are there things in your mind that you want to work on?

Imbrie: Not so much that. I could easily start at any point just by deciding what I was going to write. The minute I sit down at the piano and start saying, all right, this is going to be a piece for piano, or it's a piece for orchestra, or whatever, I just jot down a few notes and pretty soon it begins to grow. I have to figure out what to do next and then I get involved, so it's not so much a relief from composing, it's a need to compose.

Crawford: I remember reading that Stravinsky said that whenever he first put pen to paper there was a feeling of terror.

Imbrie: I know what he meant, yes. There are so many possibilities and there's nobody to tell you which is the right one. You have to provide enough detail in order to make things go--the thing starts to move in a certain direction but only after you've started it. It doesn't go until you've written something down.

Crawford: Let me read a sentence to you and get your reaction to it: "In listening to this music, one is immediately made aware of the presence of a forceful musical personality at work who has full command over his resources. Here is unconventional music in the great tradition. Here is pattern made to sing. Here is movement in sound, expressing that which is noble."

Imbrie: That sounds wonderful. [laughter] Who's this? This our friend again?

Crawford: You wrote this about Roger Sessions, but it might be a description of your music.

Imbrie: Yes, that's the way I felt about it. I had forgotten that I'd said that exactly, but that's the way I felt. I think I felt that way about Sessions because he was absolutely uncompromising and yet very human. You could tell he wasn't being uncompromising because he was nasty or he was trying to hit you over the head. It was something he had to say and he was saying it in an eloquent manner. That's the way I would hope to be myself. I mean, it's that kind of feeling that one tries to transmit to one's own students, too.

Crawford: What more do you want to say?

Imbrie: Well, I'm trying to remember what it is that we've covered and what we haven't covered. I've said some of this already today; about the whole idea of sonata form and the fact that classical tonality is not indispensable for that principle.

You can set up harmonic areas of varying similarity and contrast without relying on tonic and dominant. In other words, you can set up certain areas--you can establish a certain kind of harmonic center and then you can move to another one which may be closely related or distantly related, and you can set up a relation between these things, which is somewhat analogous to modulation in tonal music, but it's not nearly as obvious as that. But that's the way you can create large-scale contrast and harmonic contrasts and I think it's still possible to do that.

To me motives are still viable. I think a lot of people today are not interested in motivic relationships at all; they tend to deal with texture and sonority and all that. But I think that they are still viable, and what interests me a lot is the degrees of similarity between a motive and another motive.

The motive does not have to be exactly repeated in order to be recognizable as such, so you can take a melodic turn, or a rhythmic/melodic little cell which you can call a motive, and you can repeat it literally or you can change some aspects of it, and the degree to which you change it adds to the closeness or the lack of closeness or similarity between them. The question is how much can you change it before it becomes unrecognizable as the original motive, and another thing is, what function does it perform? In other words, what does the motive do? Is it something that initiates an idea, or is it something that comes at the end of the phrase? If it comes at

the middle or the end, even if it might be identical it might be less recognizable if its function had been changed. And so I like to play with these ambiguities in my own music and I like to write melodies that are not just groups of motives.

I think that a melody is not simply a collection of motives stuck end to end, it also has to have its own character; it has to have its own unity.

So I'm very interested in longer phrases which may or may not include motives but which have their own overriding quality of moving in a certain direction, and I'm talking about things that happen in classical music but still happen in the kind of music I write. That's why I feel that it ought to be not so impossible for people who've heard classical music to understand. That coherence depends on the way one handles the similarities and the functions of motives within lines. Coherence depends on the unity of line and knowing where one is in the phrase structure.

And thus, the question of articulation comes up. That is, there are various degrees of importance of articulation. Two phrases can be closely linked but separated by a little breath, or they can overlap, or a much larger articulation will show that you are dealing with a relation between two much larger units which would include many other phrases. In other words, phrases can belong together and create larger phrase units and those in turn can create larger rhythmic units, so that the formal structure is based on this hierarchy of phrase structure. In order to make this clear you have to know how to articulate them in ways that make people understand that this is an important division. It's like the difference between a comma, a period, a semicolon, a paragraph, or a chapter. The listener has to know where he or she is in the music, in the discourse. I think all these things are the kinds of things that composers have to worry about.

Crawford: And make clear.

Imbrie: And make clear, right. Also, as I said in some other cases about the whole idea of development and its relation to a recapitulation or something, in some of my pieces I find that the standard relation between development and recapitulation is not always observed in the way that one would do it in classical music. Sometimes the final resolution of a problem can wait until the very end.

In my Third Symphony I have a case where I have two important motives. One starts the whole piece: it's very

aggressive, it has a three-note pattern, it's associated with sort of bell-like sounds. And there's another one which I call the extravagant gesture, which is a big melody that just swoops way up to a high point and then sort of curves down a little bit. And when these things first appear in the piece, the three-note motive with the bells is really part of the introduction, if you want to call it that, and the extravagant gesture occurs quite near the beginning of the piece and it continues. In other words, it swoops up and then the melody continues for quite a while and it tries to be very lyrical.

Well, then these are ideas that are planted quite early in the symphony. And the thing is that they don't come back right away; I'm hoping that people will remember them. In the second movement the three-note motive comes back as if it were trying to get back but it doesn't quite make it, you see--in the middle of the second movement. The second movement has a clarinet tune which is interrupted by this three-note thing and then the three-note thing comes back and it doesn't quite establish itself, and the clarinet tune goes on in its slightly changed form. In the last movement, the three-note theme finally comes back, and it's only at the very end, almost at the coda, where the extravagant gesture finally comes back and completes itself and the whole thing becomes a cadence at the end.

Now, this is quite different from what you'd do in a tonal classical piece, but I think it relies on very similar principles of recognition, of clarity, of making a motive memorable so that you'll be able to see what the point is of bringing it back in this way. It has nothing to do with the proportions of classical symphonies, and yet I think the sense of proportion should be maintained so that one senses when the piece is over that there's nothing left to be said, that you really completed your thought.

As I have said, when I was teaching analysis I was very interested in the whole relation between rhythm and meter at various levels of hierarchy. In meter you can have beats, you can have measures, you can have measure groups, you can have groups and groups of measures, and groups and groups and groups of measures. In the rhythmic hierarchy, you can draw little curved lines to show where the phrases begin and end, and sometimes they overlap, sometimes they're separated.

But meter cannot overlap because you can't turn the clock backwards. Metrical hierarchy is the determination of where the downbeats are at various levels of importance; and so I like to do analysis in which we say which is the most important

downbeat in the piece, which is the next most important one. So this is how you study a Beethoven piece or a Mozart piece, with an idea to getting a sense of what the proportions are really like. They're not just regular, except at the very surface level. Something will be in 4/4 time for the entire movement in Mozart, but once you get back a little way, you'll see groups of measures which are not exactly the same length. And the question is you study the proportions and see how they work out at various levels of the hierarchy.

I wouldn't dream of having a composer do that with his own music and work it out, but I think looking at Mozart and Beethoven that way gives you a sense of what proportion means, and how much flexibility you have, and when you can stretch something, when you can collapse something a little bit, and get a certain excitement out of the process of twisting the proportions a little bit. But how much can you do that, and when you do that, what does this involve, what does this imply for what you do somewhere else--you see, all these matters of proportion, I think, are extremely important.

Crawford: So this is teaching theory, isn't it, to do this kind of analysis?

Imbrie: Well, they call it theory but I used to tell people that you don't learn the theory of swimming, you learn how to swim. [laughter] It's analysis and the theory, of course, is the principle under which you analyze. You have to have a theory or something before you analyze it.

Schenker's theory was very important in that it investigates linear hierarchies. And this theory of a hierarchy of rhythmic and metrical units is another theoretical concept which I think can be useful in studying analysis. In analysis you're not criticizing the piece that you're looking at. You assume that it's perfect, or else you wouldn't look at it. You assume that Beethoven knew what he was doing. You're not telling Beethoven he should have done something different. And so you study the piece with the idea of trying to learn from Beethoven about proportion and so forth.

Crawford: Yes, you've written fairly extensively about that. Is that something that's disappearing from teaching?

Imbrie: I hope not. I think that the Schenker theory had an enormous impact in this country, more so than it did in Europe actually, and I know that there are many people interested in these whole questions of rhythm and meter. By the way, the study of motivic relations and functions is essentially non-

hierarchical. This was of great interest to Schoenberg. When he saw a Schenker diagram of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, he asked: "But where are all my favorite passages?"

There are various kinds of terminology that different people use. I don't think there's a standard terminology that everybody accepts. I use the terminology that makes me comfortable, but I know lots of other people who use somewhat different terminology. We more or less understand one another and I think that people are very much interested in this, still. At the best institutions this kind of thing is taught one way or another.

Crawford: You mentioned Mozart and Beethoven and I wonder if you do go back to the baroque and to Bach, Bach being so modern in many ways.

Imbrie: Oh, you can do Bach, too. Oh, yes. His phrase structure is perhaps looser in a way than Mozart's; there's more irregularity of phrases, especially in the fugues, for example. And no, I've taught courses in fugue where people have to learn how to write fugues more or less in the Bach manner and in order to do that you study Bach fugues very intensively from this point of view--from the point of view of melodic and harmonic structure as well as metrical and rhythmic structure, and how you do these little contrapuntal things. It's a difficult course, but it's worth doing because it gives you that sense of control.

Transcribed by Amelia Archer
Final Typed by Shannon Page

APPENDIX

A List of Compositions and Biographical Sketch 162

B "A Grain of Salt," by Andrew Imbrie, 1965 167

C "'Expressive Behavior' in Music," by Andrew Imbrie, from *Conference on a Longitudinal Study of Expressive Behavior in the Arts,* Jack Morrison, 1965 171

D "The Composer's Higher Learning," by Andrew Imbrie, 1970 174

E "Is Experimentalism Dead?", by Andrew Imbrie, 1978 179

F "Statement About My Music," by Andrew Imbrie, 1978 195

G "American Music In and Out of the Universities," contribution to the *Einaudi Enciclopedia della Musica*, 1978 196

H "Andy Imbrie on Writing Music," from *42 News*, An occasional newsletter for the Princeton Class of 1942, September 1999 207

I Program notes; pencil worksheets and printed score of "Full Fathom Five," *Songs of Then and Now*, 1999 208

J Press Reviews (various) 224

Andrew Imbrie

List of Compositions
(Biographical sketch: see last 2 pages)

Titles preceded by a double asterisk are published by Malcolm Music, Ltd., sole selling agent: Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa. 18327. Phone 1-800-962-8584.

Titles preceded by a single asterisk are available on rental from the same publisher. Shawnee has been bought by G. Schirmer, a division of Music Sales Corp. Rental titles may be obtained for perusal from Music Sales Corp., Distribution Center, 5 Bellvale Road, Chester, N. Y.. 10918. Phone (914) 469 2271.

STRING QUARTET #1 ('42)
Senior thesis at Princeton. N. Y. premiere, Bennington Quartet, at an ISCM concert, '44. Received N. Y. Music Critics' Award '44. Recorded by Juilliard Quartet, Columbia ML 4844.

TRIO #1, vln., vc., pf. ('46)
Composed for Princeton University Bicentennial; premiere Princeton '47.

BALLAD for orchestra ('47)
Master's thesis at U. C. Berkeley. Premiere RAI orchestra, Rome '49. Also San Francisco Symphony '56.

PIANO SONATA ('47) (New Valley Music Press, Smith-Mt. Holyoke College, Northampton, Mass.) Composed at American Academy in Rome. Premiere Rome '47.

DIVERTIMENTO (fl., bn., tp., vln., vc., pf.) ('49)
Premiere Rome '49.

**ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT (Whitman) (mixed chorus and string orch.) ('49)
Premiere Berkeley '50. Recorded by Gregg Smith Singers, Vox SVBX-5354.

*3 SONGS (Frost, Masters, Ransom) (sopr. with piano or orch.) ('49)
Premiere (orch. version) Lucca, Italy '49.

** SERENADE, fl., vla., pf. ('52)
Commissioned by Mrs. Edward Hohfeld. Premiere San Francisco '53. Recorded by Louise di Tullio, Walter Trampler, Lois Brandwynne, Desto DC 7150. Reissued on CD by CRI.(CD 632)

**STRING QUARTET #2 ('53)
Commissioned by Creative Concerts Guild, Cambridge, Mass. Premiere, Kroll Quartet, Cambridge '53. Recorded by California Quartet, Contemporary S 7022.

**VIOLIN CONCERTO ('54)
Commissioned by Koussevizky Foundation. Premiere San Francisco Symphony, Robert Gross, soloist, Berkeley '58. Also at San Francisco (Jacob Krachmalnik, soloist) '65, etc. Naumburg Award. Recorded by Columbia Symphony, Carol Glenn, soloist, Columbia CSP-6597.

TWO CHRISTMAS CAROLS (TBB, pf.) ('55)
I. Quid petis, O fili?, 2. In die nativitatis.

INTROIT, GRADUAL AND ALLELUIA FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY (SATB, organ) ('56)

*LITTLE CONCERTO (pf. 4-hands and orch.) ('56)
Commissioned by Milton and Peggy Salkind. Premiere Oakland Symphony '61. Also Marin Symphony, Bach Society Orchestra of Harvard University.

**STRING QUARTET #3 ('57)
Commissioned by Fromm Foundation. Premiere, Walden Quartet, Urbana, Ill. ('57). Recorded by Walden Quartet, Contemporary S 7022.

**LEGEND for orchestra ('59)
Commissioned by Ford Foundation. Premiere San Francisco Symphony '59. Also RAI Orch., Rome '59, Knoxville Orch. San Francisco Symphony '91. Recorded by San Francisco Symphony CRI 152.

**IMPROMPTU (vln., pf.) ('60)
Commissioned by Naumburg Foundation for violin competition. Premiere, N. Y.'60. Recorded by Robert Gross, Orion ORS 73107. Recorded by Norman Paulu and Howard Carp, GM 2052CD.

*DRUM-TAPS (Whitman) (mixed chorus and orch.) ('60)
Commisssioned by N. Y. Interracial Chorus, Premiere N. Y. '61. Also, Oakland Symphony and Chorus '62.

PSALM 42 (AS THE HART PANTETH) (TBB, organ) ('62) (C. F. Peters)

THREE AGAINST CHRISTMAS or CHRISTMAS IN PEEBLES TOWN (Wincor) Opera, 4 scenes ('60) (C. F. Peters) Premiere, Berkeley, '64.

*THREE SONGS FOR MIXED CHORUS ('65)
1. a wind has blown the rain away (cummings), 2. Love Distills Desire upon the Eyes (Euripides), 3. The Serpent (Roethke).

**SYMPHONY #1('65)
Written for Josef Krips. Premiere San Francisco Symphony '66. Also Los Angeles Philharmonic, Mehta, '68, Tanglewood Orchestra '91.

**'CELLO SONATA (vc., pf.) ('66)
Commissioned by Robert Sayre. Premiere San Francisco '67. Recorded by Sayre and Bogas, Desto DC 7150. Reissued on CD by CRI. (CD 632)

**3 SKETCHES (tbn., pf.) ('67)
Commissioned by Stuart Dempster. Premiere San Francisco '67. Recorded by Dempster and Aanerud, New World Records NW 254. Reissued on CD by New World Records. (CD 80541-2) ("New Music for Virtuosos")

**DANDELION WINE (ob., cl., string quartet, pf.) ('67)
Commissioned by the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, premiere by the Fine Arts Quartet, Milwaukee '68. Recorded Turnabout TV 5 34520.

*CHAMBER SYMPHONY ('68)
Commissioned by Dartmouth College. Premiere Hanover, N. H. '68. Also, Stanford University Symphony, Juilliard Orch. ('79)

**STRING QUARTET #4 ('69)
Commissioned by the Pro Arte Quartet. Premiere Madison, Wisconsin '69. Recorded by the Emerson Quartet, New World Records NW 212. Recorded by the Pro Arte Quartet, GM 2052CD.

*SYMPHONY #2 ('70)
Written for Josef Krips. Premiere San Francisco Symphony '70.

**SYMPHONY #3 ('70)
Written for the Halle Orch., Manchester, England. Premiere, Manchester '70. Also, Oakland Symphony '78., American Composers Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, 92. Hinrichsen Award. Recorded London Symphony (Farberman) CRI SD 308. Reissued on CD by CRI. (CD 632)

**TO A TRAVELER (cl., vln., pf.) ('71)
Commissioned by the San Francisco Chamber Music Society. Premiere San Francisco '72. Recorded By Alan Kay, Cyrus Stevens, Edmund Niemann, New World Records, CD 80441-2.

LET ALL THE WORLD (Herbert) (SATB, brass, perc., organ) ('71)

**CELLO CONCERTO ('72)
Commissioned by the Oakland Symphony. Premiere (Kell, Farberman) '73.

*PIANO CONCERTO #I ('73)
Commissioned by Paul Masson Vinyards. Premiere (Helene Wickett, Sandor Salgo) Saratoga, Calif. '73. Also U. C. Berkeley (Gianopoulos, Senturia).

*PIANO CONCERTO #2 ('74)
Commissioned by the Ford Foundation. Premiere (Gita Karasik) Indianapolis Symphony '76. Also Monterey Symphony '76, San Francisco Symphony (McCray, De Waart) '81.

*ANGLE OF REPOSE (Stegner-Hall) Opera in 3 acts ('76)
Commissioned by the San Francisco Opera. Premiere (5 performances) San Francisco '76.

**FLUTE CONCERTO ('77)
Commissioned by the New York Philharmonic. Premiere (Julius Baker, Leinsdorf) '77. Also San Francisco Concert Orch. (Baker, Sayre) '79.

LET US NOW SING THE PRAISES OF FAMOUS MEN (SATB, organ) ('77)

PROMETHEUS BOUND (Aeschylus) for 3 soloists, double chorus, orch., and dance.('79)
Premiere, Berkeley '80. Also '89.

5 ROETHKE SONGS (sopr. and pf.) ('80) (C. F. Peters)
Premiere San Francisco '81. Recorded by Susan Narucki and Martin Goldray, New World Records, CD 80441-2.

3 CAMPION SONGS (vocal quartet SATB and pf.) ('81)
Commissioned by Naumburg Foundation. Premiere N. Y. Vocal Arts Ensemble, N. Y. '84. Recorded by New World Records, CD 80441-2

SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY (Dryden) (Mixed chorus, brasses, perc., 2 pianos, solo flute, 2 solo violins) ('81)
Commissioned by California State University, Hayward. Premiere '8l.

SHORT STORY (piano solo) ('82) (C. F. Peters)
Commissioned by Claudia Stevens. N. Y. premiere '83. Recorded by Leslie Amper, Neuma New Music Series, vol. 3 (Neuma CD 450-81).

PILGRIMAGE (fl., cl., vln., vc., pf., perc.) ('83) (C. F. Peters)
Commissioned by Collage Ensemble of Boston. Premiere '84. Also N. Y. New Music Ensemble, members of San Francisco Symphony, members of Los Angeles Philharmonic, Speculum Musicae, etc. Recorded by Collage, Gunther Schuller, cond. GM 2019CD.

*REQUIEM in memoriam John Imbrie (sopr. solo, mixed chorus, orch.) ('84)
Commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony. Premiere '85 (De Waart).

DREAM SEQUENCE (fl., ob., cl., vln., vla., vc., pf., perc.) ('86) (C. F. Peters)
Commissioned by Frank Taplin. Premiere , Parnassus Ensemble, N. Y. '86. Also Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Brandeis University, San Francisco. Recorded by Parnassus Ensemble, Anthony Korf, cond., New World Records, CD 80441-2.

DAEDALUS (piano solo)('86)(Fallen Leaf Press, P.O. Box 10034, Berkeley, Calif. 94709)
Commissioned by City University of New York. Premiere, Diana Dabby, '87.

ORGAN PRELUDE ('87)
Premiere James Thvedt, Berkeley '87.

*STRING QUARTET #5 ('87)
Commissioned by the Pro Arte Quartet. Premiere, Madison, Wisconsin and Library of Congress, Washington D. C. Oct.-Nov. '89. Recorded by the Pro Arte Quartet, GM 2052CD.

THREE-PIECE SUITE (hp., pf.) ('87)
Commissioned by Anne Adams and Jane Galante. Premiere, Belmont and San Francisco '88. Also performed in Boston by Ann Hobson Pilot and Christopher Oldfather, '92. Recorded by Barbara Allen, Edmund Niemann, New World Records, CD 80441-2.

TRIO #2 (vln., vc., pf.)('89)
Commissioned by Readers Digest/Meet the Composer and by Chamber Music America. Premiere by Francesco Trio, San Francisco '90. Recorded by Francesco Trio, Music & Arts CD-756.

REMINISCENCE (guitar) ('92)
Written for Marc Teischolz. Premiere, Earplay concert, San Francisco, March 25, 1996.

*PIANO CONCERTO #3 ('92)
Commissioned by Riverside Orchestra of N. Y. for pianist Alan Feinberg. Premiere N. Y. '93. To be issued on CD.

ADAM ('94)
(Cantata for mixed chorus with soprano solo and small orchestra, to late medieval and American Civil War-era texts). Commissioned by the Cantata Singers of Boston, David Hoose, Director. Première Boston Nov. '94.

EARPLAY FANTASY ('95) (fl., cl., vn. vc., pf., perc.)
Commissioned by Earplay, San Francisco. Performed by Earplay ensemble March 25, 1996. Also in Boston (Collage) March 31, and New York (Parnassus) April 2, 1996

MUKASHI MUKASHI (ONCE UPON A TIME) (2 pianos) Commissioned by Rae Imamura and Aki Takahashi. Première Santa Cruz April 16, 1997.

SPRING FEVER ('96) (fl., ob., cl., pf., perc. 2 vn., vla., vc. cb.) Commissioned by Collage, Boston, to be performed May 4,1997.

CHICAGO BELLS ('97) (vln., pf.) Commissioned by Frank Taplin [Library of Congress, McKim Fund]. Manuscript in L. of C. permanent collection. .To be performed there.

SOLILOQUY ('98) (vln. solo) Commissioned by Janet Packer of Boston. To be performed by her on tour.

SONGS OF THEN AND NOW ('98) (sopranos, altos, fl., cl., vln., vla., pf., perc.)
commissioned for performance by San Francisco Girls Chorus and San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Olayers at Hertz Hall, Berkeley, Oct. 4, 1998. Texts by R. L. Stevenson, e. e. cummings, Shakespeare.

Current Commission

Chamber Music Society of Minnesota [Young-Nam Kim]: piano quartet.

Biographical Information

Born New York April 6, 1921

Lived in Princeton, N. J. '26-'42.

Schools:
Princeton Country Day School ('35)
Lawrenceville School ('38)
Princeton University (B. A. '42)
University of California, Berkeley (M. A. '47)

Teachers

Leo Ornstein (piano and composition) until '42
Nadia Boulanger, summer of '37
Robert Casadesus (piano) summer of '41

Roger Sessions '37-'47.

Military Service
'42-'46: 2nd Lt., Signal Corps, AUS

American Academy in Rome
Fellow '47-'49
As Guggenheim Fellow '53-'54
as Composer in Residence '67-'68

Awards
N. Y. Music Critics' Award '44 for String Quartet No. 1
Alice M. Ditson Award (Columbia University) '47
National Institute of Arts and Letters Grant '50
Merit Award, Boston Symphony
Brandeis University Creative Arts Award '57
Hinrichsen Award '71
Guggenheim Fellowship '53-'54 (Rome) and '59-'60 (Tokyo)
Berkeley Citation (University of California, Berkeley) '91

Jacob Ziskind Visiting Professor, Brandeis University '82

Holder of Jerry and Evelyn Hemmings Chambers Chair, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Music, '89-'92.

Faculty Research Lecturer, '90-'91, University of California, Berkeley.

Composer in Residence, The Festival at Sandpoint, Idaho (Gunther Schuller, artistic director) summers of '89, '90, '92, '93.

Composer in Residence, Tanglewood Music Center, Lenox, Mass., summer of '91.

Endowed Chairholder, School of Music, University of Alabama '92.
Visiting Professor, Department of Music, University of Chicago, spring and fall '94.
Visiting Professor, School of Music, Northwestern University, Chicago, fall '94.
Visiting Professor, Department of Music, New York University, fall '95
Visiting Professor, Department of Music, University of Chicago, fall and winter '96-'97.
Fromm Professor, Department of Music, Harvard University, fall '97

Memberships:
American Academy of Arts and Letters ('69)
American Academy of Arts and Sciences ('80)
Board of Directors, Koussevitzky Foundation
Board of Governors, San Francisco Symphony ('82-'91)

Professor of Music, University of California, Berkeley ('49-'91)
Member of faculty of San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Married Barbara Cushing '53
Two sons: Andrew Philip (b. '58)
John Haller ('62-'81)

A Grain of Salt

Andrew Imbrie

(for the College Music Society, March 22, 1965)

I do not know when the word "theory" first came to mean the study of harmony, counterpoint, and fugue. It seems a strange term to apply to a discipline presumably designed to develop a student's mastery of a craft. One doesn't learn to swim by studying the theory of swimming. When Beethoven stopped studying counterpoint with Haydn and turned instead to Schenk and Albrechtsberger, it was surely not because these latter understood more theory than Haydn did; it was, rather, because Haydn failed to provide the discipline Beethoven knew he needed. That is, Haydn simply allowed too many errors to pass uncorrected.

Perhaps our present tendency to regard the fundamentals as "theory" may have something to do with the spirit of our times. No longer, it seems, can a craft be handed down from master to disciple in the same way as in Beethoven's time. And even Beethoven displeased his teacher Albrechtsberger by questioning the rules at every turn: yet despite this, he executed hundreds of strict exercises with meticulous care. Today it is the teachers who question the rules.

This, of course, is quite understandable. We have become style-conscious to a point where it is possible to entertain the notion that the rules are nothing more than statistical generalizations. Faced with a choice of styles from many different times and places, we can observe that whereas parallel fifths are "infrequent" in Bach or Webern, they are "typical" of organum and French impressionism. Everything becomes relative. Robbed of any convictions about the matter, we discover that the safest way to teach is by the historical-statistical method. The student becomes a kind of computer which is programmed to produce imitations of this or that "common practice period."
The student's acquiescence in this role is secured on the grounds that the study of a style is an end in itself: i. e., that the study of "modal counterpoint" leads to an understanding of the 16th century, or the study of "traditional harmony" to that of the 18th and 19th. After all, we ask, what other purpose could such study serve, since 20th century music no longer exhibits these stylistic norms? But even the 20th century itself has become the victim of the new academicism: there are handbooks which attempt to codify procedures drawn indiscriminately from many recent sources to produce a kind of do-it-yourself compilation of recipes for the up-to-date aspirant in composition.

This eclectic pedagogy has, of course, been challenged by an opposing group of textbook-writers, essentially on the ground that it is not sufficiently theoretical. What is needed, they claim, is a kind of "unified field theory" applicable to all styles and periods. Mere observation of the statistical frequency of a given procedure at a given time and place does not penetrate the surface of the music: it does not answer the question "why?". The search for an absolute standard against which to measure divergent types of music has led to some fascinating and useful formulations, beginning with Hindemith's and continuing through some of the latter-day attempts to broaden the base and the application of Schenker's analytical system. But, inevitably, the broader the spectrum of styles included, the less specific and incisive becomes the theoretical justification. What becomes apparent, rather, is that even the most ingenious theory exhibits the same human failing on the part of its creator as do the compositions of the masters whose

music it attempts to measure: i. e., each theory betrays its author's unconscious preferences and those of his time and place -- each theory, in short, has a style.

This difficulty, too, has been recognized, and has led to another and opposite reaction on the part of the theorists. If there can be no objective standard against which diverse procedures can be measured, is it not better to abandon the attempt to find one? Especially in the 20th century, there are so many methods of organizing the musical raw-material -- some of them very explicitly schematized by the composers themselves -- that it is very tempting to approach music from a radically *ad hoc* standpoint. Thus, for example, Alan Forte makes the following statements in his analytical treatise, *Contemporary Tone Structures*:

> "A musical composition is essentially an indivisible structure, a complete, highly integrated system..... A musical structure is a complex of ordered and interrelated tonal events which unfolds in time..... A major feature of this study....is that it attempts to discover the structural premises and postulates of individual compositions without recourse to a pre-established theory. Each work is examined in its own terms, according to its own structural premises."

Aside from certain logical difficulties (for example: in what sense can we speak of a system as having "structural premises" which can be discovered "without recourse to a pre-established theory"? Surely the decision as to how or whether something is ordered or integrated presupposes a theory of what constitutes order.), one is struck by a rather far-reaching implication. If the examination of each work purely "in its own terms, according to its own structural premises" is to yield fruitful analytical (and, presumably pedagogical) results, it must assume that a listener is capable of *hearing* a work likewise "in its own terms, according to its own structural premises." To a certain extent, this is, of course, true: we do not expect a Bach fugue to turn suddenly into a Beethoven scherzo, or even, for that matter, into a different Bach fugue with a different subject. A measure of the greatness of a work of art is its *unique* character -- with all that this word implies. Nevertheless, the insistence on the avoidance of pre-established theory implies that the experience which the listener brings with him to the apprehension of the piece of music under discussion is unimportant. The listener's mind -- as far as his appreciation of the piece is concerned -- is a blank, a *tabula rasa* on which the composer inscribes his runic message. The key to this message is supplied by the message itself; and when deciphered, the message refers, again, only to itself. The music presupposes no past, and the experience of other music cannot help the listener in any significant way.

The theorist who adheres to the conception of musical systems as self-inclosed must, presumably, when faced with the problem of teaching harmony or counterpoint of the "traditional" kind, regard such studies in the same light: as the exploration of a fascinating mechanism whose historical importance warrants such study, but which can have no application to the problems of today. And we find ourselves back on the stylistic merry-go-round.

Before discussing the question of how or whether "traditional" counterpoint, harmony, and fugue should be taught today, I wish to urge that the remarks made above not be taken to signify rejection of all the textbooks and treatises written from one or

another of the points of view mentioned. On the contrary, there are some excellent ones, including the work of Forte specifically alluded to. My plea, rather, is for a grain of salt.

A fool-proof theoretical foundation for the study of the fundamentals is not going to be found -- thank Heaven. Theory has made, and will continue to make, invaluable contributions to pedagogy; but theory is not and cannot be perfect. Nor need it be, in order to serve its purpose. Fux thought he was imparting the secrets of the Palestrina style, yet the scholarly studies of Jeppesen have shown how far Fux was from this ideal. This fact did not, however, prevent Beethoven from acquiring mastery through the study of Fux's text. Not mastery of Palestrina's style, or even Fux's, but mastery of Beethoven's.

I believe that species counterpoint, triadic harmony, and fugue should be taught today. I believe that it is useful to base these studies on the music of the 16th, 18th, and 19th century masters -- not with a view to exact imitation, but with a view to hearing and understanding what happens when tones are placed in relation to one another.

I have been told that Ernest Bloch used to say to his students: "We will now take a lesson from Mr. Bach." This implies an initial *act of faith*, without which I believe that learning cannot take place. That is to say: one must begin by trusting Mr. Bach. To understand, one must emulate; emulation is based on love, not on coercion or even on reason.

I believe (as an article of faith, if you will) that despite our cosmopolitan attitudes and historicizing sensibilities, we are still the direct heirs of the Western musical tradition, and that once the music of the great masters has entered our blood-stream, we cannot choose to discount it. This music surrounds us on all sides and compels our love. It affects our modes of hearing, and hence our way of composing. Whatever we do as composers is in some sense conditioned by this music. We must hear our way through it and build upon it. While our students are acquiring technical skill, we must be sure that they are also acquiring an intimate familiarity with a good number of masterpieces -- not as examples of historical trends, but as masterpieces. Some of these, incidentally, should be chosen from the 20th century.

I believe that as teachers we should operate under the assumption that every student is a potential composer. The emphasis should be on the effects that he, the student, is producing, and the control that he is learning to exert over the material. I am profoundly suspicious of what is sometimes called the "creative approach", in which the student is invited to compose "freely" before he has leaned how to control his material. Self-expression cannot be achieved without discipline.

I consider it relatively unimportant which textbook a teacher uses, or which of several alternative methods. I personally, for example, do not feel that counterpoint studies need concern themselves greatly with the various ecclesiastical modes; but there are those who feel strongly that these are important. The student stands only to gain if the teacher succeeds in communicating his conviction about the *musical* (as apposed to historical or ideological) importance of any aspect of the materials. There is more than one stairway to Parnassus.

It is ultimately the relation between student and teacher that counts. Obviously, classes should be small, especially at the beginning. The core of the course of study should be the students' written assignments, and the utmost care should be given to correcting them and returning them promptly. The teacher should illustrate frequently

at the keyboard, quoting examples from the literature wherever possible, from memory, or inventing passages on the spot to illustrate his points.

The teacher should also occasionally write his own exercises for the students (melodies to harmonize, basses, fugue subjects, etc.) -- preferably at the blackboard, without prior preparation. He should, in short, show by personal example what a trained musician should be able to do as a matter of course.

Naturally, students are going to ask the question "why?", and the teacher must be prepared. Thus, it is essential for the teacher to have familiarized himself with the theoretical explanations that have been advanced, and impart pertinent aspects of these to the student, together with whatever insights he himself can bring. It is crucial that the student be allowed to evaluate for himself the basis of his musical education, without slighting his technical training. The acquisition of discipline and the development of a critical attitude need not contradict one another, but rather will stimulate one another, if the student is constantly reminded, by precept and example, of the lofty goals for which he is striving. For it is nothing less than the dignity of true craftsmanship that he should aspire to. Even the musician who has no intention of becoming a composer should have the experience of knowing what it is like to learn the fundamentals. His understanding of the music of any style and period will be the greater if it is regarded as a by-product, rather than the chief goal, of this study. For he must first know what it is like to get his hands dirty with the materials from which masterpieces are wrought.

As for the student who wants to be a composer, he desperately needs -- especially today -- this kind of first-hand knowledge of what he inherits from the past, in order to steer a clear course through uncharted waters. Only through this knowledge -- as much "visceral" as intellectual -- can he evaluate the wholesale iconoclasm which surrounds him. If he chooses to reject his heritage, or any part of it, he will at least know what he is rejecting. More likely, however, he will, by acknowledging his debt to the past, learn what it is to be truly free.

X

"EXPRESSIVE BEHAVIOR" IN MUSIC

Andrew Imbrie
University of California
Berkeley

In the attempt to gather my thoughts quickly on this subject, it occurred to me to consult Webster for a definition of the verb "to express." After all, one uses the word freely in talking about music. What is it really supposed to mean? The pertinent parts of Webster's definition are as follows: "To make known, to state." The word "express" belongs also to a group of words meaning "to let out what one feels or thinks." The word itself specifically "suggests an impulse to reveal in any way, as in words, in gestures, in what one makes or produces."

Making known, letting out, revealing: all this implies that music, or any art, is some kind of vehicle by which ideas and feelings can be transmitted from one person to another. Like language, it has to be conceived as a system of symbols. Presumably different kinds of systems are appropriate to different kinds of thoughts or feelings. In other words: there are some things that only music can say.

Thus it seems evident at the outset that any serious study of expressiveness in music would necessarily involve a study of what music can and cannot say. But we must not omit to mention at this point that the very existence of expressive power in music is disputed. There are some who argue that a piece of music is an arrangement of sounds whose beauty is self-contained: that music is simply itself; that it does not represent or express anything outside itself. If I were to subscribe to this belief, I would then be forced to say that the term "expressive" has no application to music. I am not a trained aesthetician, but a composer; therefore my position on this issue arises from whatever intuitive insights I have been able to gain through experience, and also undoubtedly from my personal predilections. I feel that in music, perhaps more than in any other art, the roles of formal beauty and expressive symbolism are inextricably intertwined.

In music there are two categories of creative activity: performance and composition. I am going to try to treat them together for the remainder of this brief set of observations. But I should begin by saying that, of course, composition is the fundamental area of musical creativity. But performance also requires a high degree of creativity, as does any interpretive art; since the performer, by his selections from among countless possible decisions as to how to play or sing a given piece of music, ends up not only by transmitting the composer's intent, but by putting a good deal of himself into the process. An experienced composer, on the other hand, will realize the indispensable role of the performer in the total finished product, and if he is wise, will not attempt to dictate too closely the exact method of procedure at each moment, but will,

rather, limit himself to those directions and instructions which will help the performer to realize his own artistic aspirations within the framework of the composition. This is not to say that anything is to be left to chance or whim (there are many people who are now exploring this possibility). To my mind, a vast gulf separates human sensibilities from the throwing of dice.

It seems to me that there are two requirements for creativity in an individual: aptitude and vision. By aptitude I mean all those things for which fairly accurate measurements can be devised, such as a good pitch sense (the ability to "carry a tune"), the ability to remember and reproduce with accuracy melodic and rhythmic patterns dictated to another person, the muscular control and coordination necessary to sing or play an instrument, etc. Under the heading of aptitude should also come those higher skills which are based on those just mentioned: the ability to do well in harmony or counterpoint, or to acquire a smooth and convincing baton technique, or to learn rapidly certain classical methods of performance--for example, the ability to make a Chopin rubato sound different from the kind one would use in Mozart. These skills can be acquired by an apt student from a good teacher: they involve alertness and a predisposition toward understanding musical nuance and rhetoric. The apt student may not necessarily be able to tell you why or how he does what he does. I remember that my piano teacher had two instruments in his studio, and that my lessons were often conducted without any interchange of words between us. In composition, a student can likewise imitate classical models quite expertly and tastefully. In fact it is my conviction that he should be made to do so as part of his training. My point here is that these things can be taught and learned. I have finally decided that my harmony students can be divided into three categories: the mediocre students, the good students, and the interesting students. The good students are the ones who get the best grades. The majority of them are girls. The interesting students are divided about equally between girls and boys. Some of them habitually get good grades, some do not. Some have better "ears" than others. From amongst this group come the potential composers. Even this group, however, yields a low percentage. The ones with the poorer ears fall by the wayside. The next to go are those who are essentially lazy and lacking in self-discipline. (People are often interesting because it's easier to be interesting that to master fundamentals.) And finally, there are those who simply have nothing to say.

This bring me to my second requirement for creativity: vision. By vision I mean all the things for which accurate measurements have not been devised. An individual with vision is one who sees the world in his own way. Vision cannot be taught, but only acquired painfully through experience. But through the refinement of the techniques that can be taught, a composer or performer's vision can be sharpened, deepened, and finally communicated. In fact, it is here that the inextricability of form and expression comes in. Which is first, the chicken or the egg? An artist thinks in terms of his materials. Musicians think in musical, not verbal terms when they are exercising their gifts as musicians. In order even to think in these terms, a musician must have the necessary control

over these materials. Therefore a musician cannot have a unique vision without a technique. Yet the goal of acquiring a technique is to "express" one's inner vision! Therefore this vision must pre-exist, at least in embryonic form. I know of no way in which it can be discovered, however, until the individual has acquired the basic means of communication.

The problem is made ever more subtle when we consider that the way an artist thinks is much conditioned by the historical circumstances in which he finds himself. These circumstances influence not only his political, religious, or moral views of life, but his views toward the technique and meaning of his own art. The composer or performer inherits a tradition. To the extent of his vision, he changes this tradition in some way: he leaves the imprint of his personality on it in such a way that it will never be quite the same. The greater the artist, the deeper the imprint. Some artists in some times feel a compelling necessity to revolutionize the language of their art--not out of a desire for sensationalism, but because their vision demands it (possibly because history demands it). Other artists in the same or different times leave an equally overpowering impression on their art simply by refinement, selection, re-moulding. There are revolutionary personalities and revolutionary times, there are evolutionary personalities and times. The same time can have aspects of both; the same person can too. The great artist is one who can convince us that he is the right man at the right time, whatever anyone else may say then or now.

How do we pick such people out of a crowd of students? Should we exercise our ability to do so, even if we possessed it? Sometimes the best teacher for the artist is the school of adversity, of public indifference. Sometimes, on the other hand, all that is needed to bring out the latent artist in a person is opportunity and money. Teaching is a wasteful but necessary process. What must never be lost is the personal equation between teacher and student.

THE COMPOSER'S HIGHER LEARNING

APPENDIX D

by Andrew Imbrie

Stravinsky's denial of the composer's place in the university derives from a single assumption: that "teaching is academic (Webster: 'Literary... rather than technical or professional...Conforming to...rules...conventional ...Theoretical and not expected to produce...practical result')." If this statement were true, it would of course follow that composers should not teach.

But the statement is not true.

Let us begin by distinguishing between academic subjects and academic teachers.

Are harmony, counterpoint, composition academic subjects? Are they literary, non-technical, conventional, impractical? I think the answer is no. Perhaps harmony and counterpoint are conventional to the extent that rules are established and enforced. But surely this is done not for the sake of the rules, but to bring about a practical result. Rules define the simpler properties of the materials. First-hand knowledge of these materials comes from getting one's hands dirty with them. Stravinsky knows this, of course, and has repeatedly gone on record in support of the exact and fundamental musical disciplines.

There are some teachers, however, who teach these subjects as if they were academic. Perhaps they look on the study of counterpoint as a cataloguing and imitation of the stylistic traits of the Renaissance, composition as the study of "the musical forms." Perhaps they think of the rules as a list of observed statistical probabilities -- or of a musical work as an example to illustrate a theory. Perhaps, indeed, they regard the study of music generally as a branch of the history of culture, and music itself as an object of contemplation rather than a field of action. Teachers of this sort are academic, sometimes in a bad sense, sometimes good. But there are few composers among them.

The university concerns itself with higher learning. Does the composer's need for practical training disqualify him from this concern, or does he

perhaps have something to contribute to it?

We might compare the practical rules of music with those of chess. The latter are truly conventional because they are immutable. The rules of music keep changing, because they are based not on convention but on human sensibility. Certain convenient and successful procedures, which assure comprehensibility in a given type of context, become frozen into conventions for a while. But the same human sensibility which demanded comprehensibility soon demands change: so the conventions are at first disguised and finally overthrown. This process produces a new context, calling for new procedures to assure comprehensibility, which result in new conventions.

The cultural historian attempts to trace how this process may have operated in the past, but only the composer can himself participate in it. Only the composer can conceive of whatever elusive relations might exist between the historic process and the vividness of his own immediate musical awareness. If he chooses to teach, he has this precise advantage over his colleague: that his knowledge is first-hand. The historian, for his part, can claim greater objectivity.

The composer as teacher, however, must cultivate another kind of objectivity that which allows him a glimpse into the student's world of feeling and experienc It is not enough for him to impart techniques -- either his own or those of others; he must strive to understand the student's expressive needs. By the way, I see no difference between expressive needs and Stravinsky's "exact appetites." The teacher's job is to help the student to develop these and to gauge their "exact limits," so that they can become "indispensable human measurements."

In certain civilisations, notably the Oriental, the teacher-pupil relationship is almost sacred; this used to be true, to a lesser degree, in the West. The idea of the self-taught artist is relatively new. It seems to be bound up

with a Romantic conception of the individual, which lends some credibility to the stance assumed by certain European composers (including Stravinsky), who claim to have learned little from their teachers and to have done it all on their own. From their testimony we are invited to conclude that anyone who acknowledges a dept to his teacher is weak.

It is true that in Europe the institutionalized teaching of composers, during the last century and continuing to the present, has reached a degree of academicism where the demands for conformity imperil the young composer's development. If he is talented, he is forced to rebel. It can be argued that this is the best thing for him: only in rebellion can he find himself. By coddling him we are making him unfit to survive.

But when rebellion becomes a prerequisite for acceptance into society, it rapidly generates its own brand of conformity, its own establishment. Thence follow inevitable new rebellions in an ever-increasing accelerando -- to the point where music itself finally becomes the polemical football in a competitive personality game.

A mature composer can sometimes help a young one to avoid this trap, and to concentrate on the development of his real powers. He can remind him of the properties of his chosen materials as they are perceived in context, and of their possible structural capabilities in that context. He may even suggest alternative contexts, in order to stretch his pupil's imagination. What must begin as a technical exercise must end in liberation.

We may, as some believe, be reaching a point where our conception of the historical process itself need re-evaluation. Our excessive style-consciousness has led us to a paralysis of self-consciousness -- so much so that a tolerant eclecticism is now being thrust upon us as the only realistic attitude to adopt. Only a real composer knows what it means to have something to say, and what it takes to evolve the exact way to say it. It is this higher learning that only he can teach. He cannot impart the gift, but he can help

provide the means and set the example.

In these brief observations I have said nothing about what the university can do for the composer, such as providing him with intelligent students, leaving him free to teadh as he thinks fit, or allowing him to eat. My main argument for the composer's rôle as teacher is the possible satisfaction he may receive from doing something for somebody else.

Department of Music
University of Maryland
College Park, Md. 20742
April 29, 1970

MEMO: To Contributors to College Music SYMPOSIUM

FROM: Donald M. McCorkle, Acting Editor

SUBJECT: A Deadline Reminder for May 15

We are most grateful for your expression of willingness to contribute to SYMPOSIUM 10, and I look forward to having your work included in a volume which is taking shape as a very good one. Thus far we are counting on contributions from the following people (in order of position in the issue): James Standifer, Zelma George, Barbara Reeder, Natalie Hinderas, Jerrold Ross, Warren A. Scharf, William Thomson, Mary Jeanne van Appledorn, Arthur Tollefson, Raynold L. Allvin, G. Welton Marquis, Jon Appleton, William Bergsma, Howard Boatwright, Milton Babbitt, Gordon Binkerd, Elliott Carter, Paul Creston, Ingolf Dahl, Cecil Effinger, Ross Lee Finney, Andrew Imbrie, Ellis Kohs, Leo Kraft, Lawrence Moss, Vincent Persichetti, John Pozdro, Gardner Read, George Rochberg, William Schuman, Seymour Shifrin, Hugo Weisgall, Charles Wuorinen, Robert A. Warner, Gwynn MacPeek, Edith Borroff, John Grubb, David Crawford, Edward Lerner, and Barry Brook.

Our deadline for receiving copy is May 15; it would be most helpful to have everything on my desk by then.

Please send me a brief biographical vita, highlighting those up-to-date items you wish to see emphasized.

We will of course send you copies of the journal when it appears in the Fall.

Thanks very much for your attention, and your forebearance of a duplicated letter.

Sincerely yours,

Donald M. McCorkle

Is Experimentalism Dead?

Andrew Imbrie

APPENDIX E

[Symposium: Experimentalism – Irvine – May 1972]

It is a pleasure to have this chance to participate in the present discussions, on a subject which (for any artist) is both absorbing and, I suppose, unavoidable. If ever the suggestion of a topic was guaranteed to loosen the tongue and start the adrenalin flowing, this is it. Is experimentalism dead? Has it run its course?

Now it may be that the professional critic can face this question with some equanimity, but the professional artist? ... hardly. The question seems to strike at the very source of our vitality, and to suggest that perhaps our efforts have come to naught, and that maybe we should not try so hard, but rather settle down into a more comfortable routine. It seems to hint that history is bearing us along on an irresistable tide, into shallower, less turbulent waters.

Before attempting to deal with such a diabolical suggestion, I should like to offer two different kinds of disclaimer. First: since music is the medium of communication in which I feel most at home, you must take my mere words with a grain of salt. I have always found words treacherous. Second: you should not believe anything I say, anyway, or any other professional artist, for that matter, when it comes to talking about the history of our art and where we belong in it. Any artist will grope for an interpretation of history that will allow himself a favored place in it. In this respect we are all equally untrustworthy. We differ amongst ourselves only in the importance that we attach to the exercise of historical self-vindication. There are artists without portfolio, whose efforts go mostly into their own work, and there are those with portfolio, who find it necessary or expedient to issue manifestoes, and to declare publicly and verbally the revolutionary significance of what they have done or are about to do.

Mozart is credited with having definitively established the structure of the solo concerto which served as the point of departure for his successors

through the end of the 19th century. But as far as I know Mozart never announced the importance of this innovation. Similarly, most of us do not ordinarily think of Brahms as the standard-bearer for a new order. It took the insight of Schönberg himself to remind us that Brahms was, after all, a progressive composer. Bartok did indeed invite our attention, verbally, to the revivifying effect that the study of folk music can have on a composer of art-music. Yet he did this with a modesty quite uncharacteristic of a pamphleteer. On the interesting question of his own structural innovations, of the comprehensive manner in which he systematized and proportioned his musical language, both rhythmically and harmonically, Bartok's silence is complete.

At the other end of the scale, there are of course composers like Gluck and Wagner, who seemed to need a public forum, an atmosphere of controversy with which to stimulate their creative drive. They were not just writing operas: they were reforming Opera with a capital O; and it was important to them that we be aware of this. In the case of Wagner the reforming zeal went much further -- to the actual evolution of an aesthetic, a sociology, and a theory of history. All the music that went before was to be thought of in stages of upward progress, leading to the pinnacle of the Wagnerian achievement, from which all the music of the future would derive its being. The relations amongst the arts, and of the arts to society, are established for all time. Small wonder that composers of the two or three generations after Wagner should have felt it necessary, for their own survival, to counter the Wagnerian threat not only in deed, but also in word. Yet it is not really the influence of Wagner's <u>theories</u> that was so disturbing. The reason his successors felt that they had to take note of them was that Wagner's <u>music</u> itself generated such enormous power. And since powerful music cannot be refuted, one had to attack the theories. And of course, the attack on the theories has been successful: they would eventually have fallen of their own weight anyway.

The promulgation of theories by a composer serves another purpose beyond the clarification of his own ideas. It also attracts attention. When I say this I am being only partially cynical. It is true that many of us are aware of the competitive world we live in, and will do almost anything to blast our way to a position of prominence in it. But there is another consideration too. A composer tends to feel, perhaps in some cases rightly, that he must provide the public with a mental set, must urge a system of values and assumptions, if he is to hope for the desired response to his music. People's attention must be captured, and they must be made to question their own assumptions. Otherwise, they might miss the point of what he is trying to do. The worst thing that can happen to a composer's self-esteem, next to the total neglect of his music, is to find that it has been classified as just another example of some trend started by somebody else.

Stravinsky is an interesting example of a composer with portfolio. His anti-Wagnerism has been the most radical to date, and certainly the most effective. Of all that determined band of iconoclasts, beginning about the time of World War I, who labored to usher in a no-nonsense, hard-edged modern era, Stravinsky was the acknowledged musical rallying-point. Not that his voice was shriller, or his polemics more inflammatory than the rest: it is just that his music is better, and, again, has to be taken seriously.

Perhaps we are, nevertheless, witnessing a true artistic revolution, in which the program or thesis becomes more and more indispensable, and occupies a position ever closer to the center of the stage. For instance, there is always Schönberg. After all, is <u>he</u> not the 20th-century example, par excellence, of the doctrinaire modernist, complete with explicit blueprint for the future of music, formally outlined and specifically presented for all the world to see? With the unveiling of the 12-tone method, have we not arrived at last at the moment in history where the manifesto,,

the program, becomes the decisive force and the most important aspect of new music? If so, we should certainly be able to go on to describe the present era -- an era in which programs, manifestoes, and ideologies are, as it were, tried out by means of experiments, with music as the laboratory. We could classify our observed data according to the types of program offered, and the nature of the experiments; and come up with results showing which programs have been most successful, which ones have attracted the greatest number of -- shall we say? -- researchers. We could even end up with an answer to the questions posed for our present consideration:namely, what is the present state of experimentalism?

Certainly there is evidence that this approach to contemporary music might work, and might accord with the phenomena of the age. Since Schönberg there has been an amazing proliferation of formal, verbal statements by composers explaining technical methods or defending philosophical aims, or both. In fact, often both: much ingenuity is lavished on the connection between ideology and technique. Existentialism, Marxism, or Asian transcendental metaphysics are severally translated into musical terms and variously urged as the ultimate rationales for musical procedures, whether these be serial, eclectic, or aleatoric. In composing the music itself, such procedures are plotted against some scenario, projected within some framework or game-plan, to allow for the actual playing out of the musical material.

In any event, it would appear that ideology must be taken into account in any study that we make of experimentalism in the arts: for indeed, an experiment cannot begin without a hypothesis; and hypotheses depend on conceptual models of the world, conscious or assumed, which Susanne Langer called "generative ideas" that are "not theories (but) the terms in which theories are conceived." The art of musical composition might be envisaged, accordingly, as proceeding in the following stages: The composer comes to his task with certain culturally conditioned assumptions about the world.

He may question these assumptions, as far as his talent for objectivity and his imaginative resourcefulness will allow. But sooner or later he arrives at a theoretical formulation about, let us say, freedom versus necessity, or causality versus an eternal present, or what have you. Then he imagines a hypothetical confrontation between these principles, and perhaps even a possible outcome. He then devises an experimental set of musical conditions under which causality will be confronted, procedurally, by its opposite, or randomness by some closed system of relations. And lo and behold, we have a generative idea leading to a theory, leading to a hypothesis, and, finally, to an experiment.

You will recall that a few moments ago I started to ask a question about Schönberg: Did his invention of the 12-tone series and its operations usher in a musical revolution in the sense that theory now precedes practice? Have we entered an age in which actual pieces of music are best conceived of as experiments which validate theories? As you may have guessed, my answer to the question will be no, and not only in so far as Schönberg is concerned. I am not questioning the reality or genuineness of the revolution: I am questioning only this assumption as to its nature. Perhaps in what follows I can suggest alternatives. My first task, however, will be to re-examine the relation between ideology and theory.

When one reflects on the 12-tone method as Schönberg presents it, one thing becomes apparent: its lack of an ideology. The author describes it as a method of systematically relating to one another, on an equal footing, all the 12 tones of the tempered chromatic scale. This method can be regarded as a logical consequence of the abandonment of classical tonality, where the relations between the tones are hierarchical, since one of them reigns supreme as the tonic, and is supported and defined in that rôle by means of its pre-established relations with the others. Of course, for any one so inclined, it is fun to explain these two contrasting principles of

organization in ideological terms. One could say that tonality on the one hand and serial organization on the other are symbols of absolutism and egalitarianism; or perhaps of religious faith and atheistic humanism, respectively. But one must be a bit careful. How far will the analogy hold? For example, in the world of musical reality, one clear corollary to the Schönbergian equalization of the 12 pitches is that for each new composition, a specific ordering must be imposed by the artist. Once having decided upon such an ordering, he must stick to it throughout the composition. I see no analogue to this in the worlds of politics, religion, or philosophy. But I am sure that there are those who are cleverer at this sort of thing, and who can come up with something plausible.

It may well be objected that Schönberg did, nevertheless, write rather volubly on a number of subjects, including aesthetics, the relation of the artist to the public, and current stylistic trends. In fact he is well remembered for his polemical tone, which some have even characterized as paranoid in its intensity. What, then, did he say in defense of his method, when he was not merely describing it? In a lecture on Composition with 12 Tones, delivered at UCLA on March 26, 1941, he made the following remarks:

> Form in the arts, and especially in music, aims primarily at comprehensibility, not only for intellectual, but also for emotional satisfaction. However, the creator's idea has to be presented, whatever the mood he is impelled to evoke. Composition with 12 tones has no other aim than comprehensibility.... The method of composing with 12 tones grew out of a necessity.

He goes on to trace its evolution during the early years of this century, while as a composer he was grappling with the contradictions inherent in the musical language of the time. He describes the dissolution of the classic tonal system, as having been brought about partially through the invasion of pictorialism, which seemed to be replacing musical structure with extra-musical association, and partially through what he calls the "emancipation of the dissonance." In the preceding generations, "the ear had gradually

become acquainted with a great number of dissonances, and so had lost the fear of their 'sense-interrupting' effect." The ear is led to accept unprepared and unresolved dissonance as semantically equivalent to consonance; and to the extent that this contributes to the downfall of classic tonality it also creates the need for something new. Schönberg began by attempting to write frankly atonal pieces. His description of what happened next is of particular interest:

> The first compositions in this new style were written by me around 1908, and, soon afterwards, by my pupils Anton von Webern and Alban Berg. From the very beginning such compositions differed from all preceding music, not only harmonically but also melodically, thematically, and motivally. But the foremost characteristics of these pieces in statu nascendi were their extreme expressiveness and extraordinary brevity. At that time, neither I nor my pupils were conscious of the reasons for these features. Later I discovered that our sense of form was right when it forced us to counterbalance extreme emotionality with extraordinary shortness. Thus, subconsciously, consequences were drawn from an innovation which, like every innovation, destroys while it produces. New colorful harmony was offered, but much was lost.

He then itemizes some of the syntactic functions of the old harmony, which had permitted the construction of larger musical edifices, Such functions "could scarcely be assured with chords whose constructive values had not as yet been explored. Hence, it seemed at first impossible to compose pieces of complicated organization or of great length." After describing his later attempts to "construct larger forms by following a text or a poem," he announces that

> after many unsuccessful attempts during a period of approximately 12 years, I laid the foundations for a new procedure in musical construction.... I called this procedure Method of Composing with 12 Tones which are Related Only with One Another.

The justification for this last step is extraordinarily suggestive.

> Whether one calls oneself conservative or revolutionary, whether one composes in conventional or progressive manner, whether one tries to imitate old styles or is destined to express new ideas -- whether one is a good composer or not -- one must be convinced of the infallibility of one's own fantasy and one must believe in one's

to evolve a systematic way to replace them. It was thus that he was able finally to say that the new method, rather than being an arbitrary construct, had been forced upon him by necessity.

The words experiment and experimental method are terms borrowed from the vocabulary of science. The process we have just observed has some interesting correspondences with the processes described by Thomas Kuhn in his book entitled "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions." According to Kuhn, most scientists spend their lives pursuing what he calls "normal science," which "means research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice." These achievements he calls "paradigms," or "models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research." Examples of such paradigms would be "'Ptolemaic astronomy' (or 'Copernican'), 'Aristotelian dynamics' (or 'Newtonian'), 'corpuscular optics' (or 'wave optics') and so on." A scientific discipline reaches its maturity only with the formation of such paradigms, and "the successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science." Normal science, meanwhile, is engaged largely in "mopping-up operations," which are both necessary and often interesting in themselves. Normal science

> extends the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself.... Closely examined, that enterprise seems an attempt to force nature into the pre-formed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sets of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. Instead, normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies... (Yet) new and unsuspected phenomena are ... repeatedly uncovered by scientific research.

How does this happen?

> Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i. e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern natural science. It then continues with a more or less extended exploration of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm theory has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become the expected. Assimilating a new sort of fact demands a more than additive adjustment of theory, and until that adjustment is completed -- until the scientist has learned to see nature in a different way -- the new fact is not quite a scientific fact at all.

Certainly the comparison with Schönberg's experience is at least suggestive. If we regard classic tonality as the prevailing paradigm, we could say that Schönberg began to work within it, but soon became aware of certain contradictions which had begun to appear within the system. His "extended exploration of the area of anomaly" led to his rejection of the paradigm, which in turn necessitated the construction of an "adjusted" paradigm. His pupils Berg and Webern could then be seen as pursuing the musical equivalent of "normal science" within the new conceptual framework. It will of course be necessary for me to comment on why musical composition is different from science. In particular, we shall have to explore the difference between a scientific experiment and, let us say, one of those short expressive pieces that are also sometimes called "experimental." I shall return to this in a moment, but first it may be useful to reflect on how our ideas about the relation between nature and art have changed, partly as a result of the Schönbergian revolution.

In his provocative book entitled "Music, the Arts, and Ideas," Leonard Meyer summerizes this change in these words:

> Since the Renaissance -- and before that, in the ancient world -- it had been virtually an article of aesthetic faith that art, though different from nature, was nevertheless based upon natural, and hence necessary, principles or laws. In music, for example, it was supposed that the diatonic and chromatic scales, the major-minor modes, functional harmony, and tonal syntax could ultimately be traced back to the natural properties of sound. Similarly

> in the visual arts, it was believed that the proper use of color, line, perspective, form, and the like depended upon natural and universal principles. And although languages were obviously not universal, it was felt that behind this manifest diversity some common, fundamental laws would eventually be discovered.
>
> But the inescapable presence of a multiplicity of styles -- Western and non-Western, old and new,-- raised serious doubts about the intrinsic naturalness of particular materials, procedures, and forms. The doubts were intensified, even confirmed, by the invention of the 12-tone system in music and the development of cubism in painting. The tremendous impact of these revolutions lay not so much in the use of new syntactic-formal means -- for Schönberg and Berg, at least, used the new method to realize traditional expressive goals -- but in the fact that they demonstrated in a dramatic and seemingly unequivocal way that art was literally artificial.

Meyer goes on to show how the new perception of the artificiality of styles and traditions led to a new perception of the creative act itself as the "invention of means and relational systems and the discovery of their implications....All these ideas prompted a number of artists to identify themselves with and to emulate the methods and procedures of science." And of course we observe the same phenomena still going on today.

Without denying the important similarities, it will now be appropriate for us to examine some of the clear differences between artistic and scientific endeavor. The scientist is concerned with discovering the structure of reality. A theory is generally accepted only if it can be proved by experiment; and experiments are devised so that the results will be decisive in testing some aspect of the theory. Experiments must be capable of being repeated by others to produce the same results. Once the proof is accepted, the experiment itself has done its work. It has no value in itself except as a means of articulating and clarifying the theory, or raising new questions about it which must then be answered by other experiments.

The composer is concerned with producing artifacts. His realities are the concrete, specific materials with which he works. These materials are not only the chosen objective sound-sources at his disposal, but the manner in which they are perceived when brought into simultaneous and successive relation

with one another. Speculation about the nature of these materials comes into play only when necessary for the immediate purpose at hand. When a composer arrives at an understanding of his materials that satisfies him, he is able to work. But he then has in no way proved his theory in the scientific sense. Neither classical tonality nor the 12-tone technique are scientific theories, nor are they truths of any kind. They are useful tools. They are, to put it differently, systems broad and self-consistent enough to serve as media for the communication of ideas. To Schönberg, the idea is all-important; and it inheres in the individual work of art. In the beginning of a piece of music, he says,

> there is produced a state of unrest, of imbalance, which grows throughout most of the piece... The method by which balance is restored seems to me the real idea of the composition."

The uniqueness of the idea recuires a unique embodiment in sound. Thus, the extremely short, expressive pieces of the early atonal period are just as valuable to us today as tonal pieces are, or pieces employing the fully developed 12-tone method. We listen today to these little pieces with undiminished admiration and love, because they work. The "sense of form" which produced them was indeed right, however limited and tentative may have been the theoretical formulations that underlie their musical vocabulary. Musical analysis and criticism may address themselves to the question of how and why they work, without necessarily passing judgment on these theoretical formulations. It is quite likely that these pieces were consciously regarded by their composers as experimental, even at the time they were written. But the fact that these same composers allowed them to be published and performed gives us the clue that they regarded the experiments as successful.

This does not obviate the need for developing new paradigms. But for the artist, this need is different in substance from the corresponding need occasionally experienced by the scientist. A new paradigm in science

either modifies or replaces an old one. As soon as the old one is superseded, it becomes defunct, and possesses only historic interest. The scientist devises his experiments solely in order to help establish or disprove the validity of the conceptual model. In art, a new paradigm seldom displaces an old one in this way, and even when most composers as a group are finally led to abandon the old one in their own work, its validity is not questioned or even tarnished with respect to the repertoire of old music, which retains its original vitality. In short, for a composer, the validity of a given paradigm depends on many things besides its persuasiveness as an imperative for abstract order, or the ideology that may have suggested it to his mind. It depends on his own cultural and historical situation, and on what Schönberg called his "sense of form." Ultimately it depends on whether or not the paradigm helps him solve his immediate compositional problems: whether it "works for him."

There has always been a good deal of misunderstanding on this point. Especially today, many composers try to elevate their ideologies or theories to the status of universal truths, and in the resulting free-for-all it is hard to tell the Davids from the Philistines without a program, especially since on all their battle-flags is emblazoned the same device: a raised cudgel rampant on a field of non-sequiturs. In fact, there is often a tendency for each of them to argue that his own particular innovation represents the future, wherefore all previous styles and attitudes are henceforth proclaimed inoperable. In contrast to the scientists, who as we have seen are extremely reluctant to "call forth new sets of phenomena," the composers of whom I speak would rather throw up as many new models as possible. But of course the more such models that exist side by side, the weaker is the claim of each one to be the unique key to the future of the art. And so we appear to be approaching what Leonard Meyer calls "stasis" -- a kind of steady state in our artistic culture -- a state which does not

depend on nistoric cycles and revolutions at all, but which can tolerate a simultaneous plurality of styles, philosophies, and methods, each with its own sub-culture to support it, ignoring one another or interacting with one another at will.

This may or may not be true: it is a question that I as a composer must leave to the judgment and clairvoyance of the critic and cultural historian. What I can contribute, perhaps, is a sense of what it feels like to be a composer at this time and place. This will not answer the question, but it might be of interest to those whose profession it is to speculate on such things.

I shall start by saying something that may seem to contradict much of what I have been saying so far: and that is, I don't really think that we composers are very much interested in history -- in our capacity as composers, that is. On our time off, yes. When we are promoting our product, yes. When we are daydreaming about our own importance, yes. But when we are composing, no.

While we are composing, the only past that concerns us is the effect of what has already been set down in the piece we are writing; and the only future we worry about is what to set down next. Our minds are totally occupied with our artifact, which is the only reality -- or, I should say, is the reality we are trying to achieve. Our goal is to see that it will be able to exist at last with no further help from ourselves. To achieve this independent and harmonious existence of what we are making, we rely on a hunch, on a conception of what the completed thing, or some part of it, might be like. Our conception is at first indistinct and subject to change. It is not a verbal description of the structure, nor is it any kind of visual diagram. Composers do not think in words or pictures. Our conception is entirely musical in nature, and its ultimate clarification and realization is the piece of music itself. It is non-ideological, non-verbal, and non-pictorial.

When Schönberg speaks of the over-riding significance of the "idea," this is what he means. For him, artistic truth, like all truth, resides in idea, not in manner or style. The artist's inner struggle is over how to put the idea in communicable form, and is symbolized in the story of Schönberg's own great opera by the struggle between Moses, with his direct knowledge of the one untranslatable God, and Aaron, with his persuasiveness and power over the souls of men. The paradoxical linking of that knowledge with this power is what the artist must bring about.

In trying to do so, he makes mistakes. Knowing the likelihood of error, he nevertheless must persist. A passage just written down will seem on examination to be unsuitable in its context, and will have to be changed, placed in a different position, or eliminated entirely. This is the only sense in which the word "experiment" can properly be used. But note that its success or failure still does not depend on proof. It depends rather on the effect it produces, as judged by the artist.

In judging effects, the composer moves from the creative to the critical stance, just as the painter steps back from his canvas at a similar moment. He takes on the rôle of the listener or spectator. By this act he cements the bond between artist and public, by assuming that what works for him will work, ultimately, for others. Without ~~consciously thinking about~~ concern for history, he places himself within history at this moment, since his ability to judge effects is conditioned by history. Of course, to think about history at that moment would simply distract him from his task of judging the effect.

But since he is conditioned by history, we should now finally try to understand how. It is obvious that any composer is free to make all kinds of conscious and pre-meditated choices with regard to style. Stravinsky could choose to take as his point of departure Russian folk-music, Pergolesi, Bach, Tschaikowsky, or Webern, and he could either quote them literally or take his inspiration from their styles or their methods. Charles Ives could

insert snatches of hymns or patriotic tunes into contexts quite foreign to their original nature, in order to achieve a sort of "collage." And one sees today a variety of younger composers seeking out effects that can be produced by the abrupt juxtaposition of styles or by the filling out, with new materials, of formal schemes derived from older music. In short, the very eclecticism of our culture has itself become raw material for the artist, and this is no doubt as it should be. A composer has, in addition, a bewildering array of new sounds to choose from, such as the novel effects added to the technical vocabulary of familiar wind, string, and percussion instruments and of the voice, or the timbre of non-Western, antique, or newly constructed instruments, or the resources of electronically manipulated or electronically generated sound. In making his choices, the composer often obligates himself to the painstaking and time-consuming acquisition of specialized knowledge. And finally, a composer today cannot help but be conscious of the number of different methods and philosophies of structure that are being used and widely touted: such as giving over to the operations of chance, or applying statistical methods to produce structures out of random input, or exploiting the possibilities of controlled improvisation, or the strict and prior control of musical elements not limited to pitch. And all this diversity is not about to go away.

One's first reaction to this might be to say that our culture is exploding so far out of control that all vestiges of tradition have been obliterated, and that without tradition art cannot survive. As a composer, I have a vested interest in denying this, and therefore would like to show how I think history really does work through the artist. The conscious choice of ideologies, methods, and materials is one thing; what you do with them is another.

On several occasions I have had the experience of serving on juries for the awarding of prizes or scholarships to young composers. My colleagues on these juries have represented diverse points of view on questions of technique

and aesthetics. Yet I have been impressed, over and over again, with the degree of consensus that is achieved whenever we are faced with real talent. I used to hear terrible stories about past juries: about the horse-trading that was supposed to have gone on; about the domination of juries by one or two influential personalities. But I have experienced none of these things myself, at least so far. Talent shines through, and when you spot it you forget your stylistic prejudices. What is it that lets this happen?

My belief is that historical tradition exerts its influence on us not through our considered choices but at the subconscious level. Every time that we recognize talent in another composer, a spark jumps across the gap that divided us. This spark is conducted by the medium of our common heritage of humanity and culture, and because of it we experience a radical adjustment of the spirit, a flash of recognition, an intimation of immortal truth brought about by the fresh sensibility of that artist in the way he combines his materials. It would not be possible for him to communicate his truth to us in any other way than by mastering the craft of making his unique artifact. That he can communicate it to us at all means, paradoxically, that we already share with him the medium of communication which he alone has perfected. Our difficulties arise when we try to put into words what that medium is. For this reason I do not envy the historian or the critic. As a composer, it is enough for me to be able to have my life changed from time to time. And if you ask me what music will be like 100 years from now, I can only reply, in the words of Roger Sessions: "If I knew that, I would be writing it."

Statement About my Music

Andrew Imbrie

(adapted from the liner notes for *String Quartet no. 4*, copyright New World Records, 1978 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.)

Composing for me is a matter of drawing out the consequences (as I perceive them) of an initial idea. This idea may present itself as contour, rhythm, gesture, or some combination of these; and the first step for me is to pin it down, to give it more definite shape and character. Once the idea has become specific enough, it begins to generate its own continuation. This is possible because every idea worthy of the name is fraught with potential energy: its components interact so as to create an expectation of forward movement. If this does not happen, it is always because the idea has been imperfectly realized and must be tinkered with until its various aspects are brought into effective cooperation.

The energies released by the first forward impulse eventually expend themselves to a point where they create a demand for contrast; yet the character of the new material is very much conditioned by that of the old. Thus the original idea generates not only its own continuation but the nature of its own opposite as well. In composing, I must ultimately reconcile the various opposing forces by finding a dramatically convincing resolution of their conflicts. The sense of the larger structure becomes increasingly clear as the work progresses.

I am not one of those composers who work by scenario, though I often sketch ahead for considerable distances before filling in details. Choices are determined by my sense of the rightness of events in context. Yet "contextual" does not seem a satisfying description. For me, no piece of music, however internally consistent, can be a law unto itself. Comprehensibility presupposes certain assumptions common to composer and listener -- assumptions not stated but shared through much listening to music of all kinds. The composer relies on some of these, stretches others, defies still others. His style is the result of a fusion of countless predilections and habits, choices both conscious and unconscious.

These shared assumptions ensure not only comprehensibility but confidence. The listener must be somehow able to recognize the exercise of craft on the composer's part -- to sense that the musical ideas, through the toughness of their own identity, create a resistance to the will of the composer who thought them up. The composer exerts his will on the material, but in terms not contradictory to the nature of that material. The listener's confidence is bestowed only if he can follow the trail of that encounter.

It is evident, then, that the unfolding of the musical drama is important to me: I do not regard my compositions as spatial or static. They move through time, and on a human scale. Music is sometimes characterized as "process." Although of course music does, by definition, proceed, the term carries with it the unpleasant connotation of a manufacturing method (the pigs go in here, the sausages come out there). I prefer to think of music as discourse. The energies just described -- the contrasts, the proportions and resolutions -- are deployed in time in such a way as to attempt to meet the listener's requirements as he reacts to what is happening, and to engage him in the drama. The listener's requirements are assessed by a composer in the following way: he must, while composing, try to hear his own piece as if he were someone else.

American Music In and Out of the Universities

Andrew Imbrie

A German professor of musicology asks a young American student composer: "Beethoven didn't need a PhD. Why do you need one? The reply: "Beethoven didn't have to teach at an American university."

In the United States, the PhD in composition began to be awarded during the '60's. Before then, it was given exclusively for historical research. This decision was arrived at only after an extended debate: in the academic community, should creativity be regarded as equivalent to scholarship, or to performance?

During the period of the second World War, a substantial number of European musicologists and composers came to the United States, often as refugees, and some of them accepted professorships. They were accustomed to the idea that composition and performance training belonged to conservatories, while universities were limited to "purely scholarly" endeavors.

At the same time, they came from a culture in which national pride dictated a generous government support for the creative arts. This legacy of support originated with the local courts or principalities -- e. g. Esterhazy -- or with centralized governments, as in France (where one had to go to Paris for training and to establish a career), or with the church.

Until the 19th century, a composer was a salaried employee of church, monarchy or principality, and was required to compose, perform and conduct for frequent state or church functions, formal or informal. New scores were in constant demand. Training was provided by private instruction. At the turn of the 19th century, many composers began to establish independent careers, culminating in the spectacular successes of Liszt, Verdi, and Wagner. Training was provided by conservatories with state and/or church support. Prestigious awards, such as the French Prix de Rome, were subsidized by the state. Meanwhile, public universities continued to be the centers for scholarship, and, ultimately, scientific and scholarly research.

In the United States, "classical" music (as opposed to hymns, military marches or folk music) was regarded initially as a foreign importation. Nevertheless, opera had an extraordinary vogue, even in small communities throughout the country, including the west; traveling opera companies toured the nation. Exposure to symphonies, or lessons in voice, piano, violin, and harp, was considered part of the education of young ladies and gentlemen whose parents aspired to elegance and refinement. Those who demonstrated unusual talent and aptitude for composition would go to Europe to complete their training.

At no point, however, did the central government conceive the notion that the arts should enjoy financial support from taxpayers. The American Revolution had done away with the concept of nobility; and the principle of democracy seemed to imply that artistic independence is a corollary of political independence. Indeed, one must wonder whether many farmers or factory workers in those days would have been happy in the knowledge that their tax dollars were supporting rarified entertainment for the wealthy. Besides, how should the government assess the merit of any applicant for largesse? Should it be determined by popular vote, or by a panel of appointed experts? How should the experts

be chosen? The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress only in 1965. Its funding is precarious, and it has remained highly controversial to this day.

At the same time, there was always the obvious and urgent need for the support of higher education in all disciplines. Scholars in many fields were in communication with one another from the very beginning: for example, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1780, and its charter from the government describes the "end and design of the institution of the said Academy" as follows: "to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people." The earliest universities were founded chiefly for the purpose of training students for the ministry of various Protestant denominations. Some of these early colonial colleges received a modicum of support from local governments, but all of them were privately controlled. Ever since independence, the Constitution has forbidden state support for church. Ultimately it became clear that government support for higher education (as well as for primary and secondary schools) was absolutely necessary, as a supplement to private colleges, however secular they might have become. Democracy implies that not only the wealthy should have access.

Public universities in the United States are under the control of the individual states (or occasionally a city such as New York), not the central government. The need for experts in many fields, from agriculture to engineering to medicine, justifies the necessary expenditure. At the same time it is recognized that general cultural literacy and awareness of history are indispensable to those who aspire to positions of responsibility of any kind (or, for that matter, to anyone who expects to vote intelligently). Training in history, literature, and the arts emerged as a natural result. Those who teach these subjects are expected to be more than mere mentors: they must demonstrate their ability as scholars through research and publication, before they can achieve tenure.

In universities and colleges, both public and private, instruction in the arts has thus been oriented toward research and historical scholarship, rather than creativity itself -- until quite recently. In music, it became evident that the mere study of its history and the analysis of its structure were meaningless in the absence of live performance and personal involvement by students. It was not enough to study scores in the library and do species counterpoint at a desk. The study of tonal harmony may improve one's understanding of the music of Bach or even Schönberg, but it also implies that one can use it one's self in various ways.

Composition and performance are indeed taught at American conservatories, for those who wish to pursue professional careers. But many state and private universities and colleges have also established extensive composition and performance programs, leading to advanced degrees. These are known as *schools* of music, whereas those universities which offer only composition and musicology have *departments* of music, which are under such larger entities as the College of Letters and Science (University of California, Berkeley). Also, there are curricula for those who wish to teach music in the public schools: these are typically organized under a School of Education, which will hire specialists in music education, but which will also have courses taught by members of the resident music departments.

These structures have developed gradually over the past century. Music was typically introduced first as an adjunct to undergraduate programs, where students were afforded the opportunity to take private lessons (not necessarily for academic credit), or where performing ensembles were organized. Courses were given in music "appreciation" or history. Ultimately it became possible for undergraduates to

concentrate in music for the bachelor's degree (AB). Some universities resisted the notion of giving academic credit for individual performance, since this would have been regarded as mere professional or vocational training, rather than academic education. Of course, limited undergraduate credit might be awarded for group performance, which could possibly be regarded as beneficial to musical understanding, assuming that "mere technique" had already been achieved at some level, outside the academic purview.

Other universities frankly accepted the principle of professionalism, analogous to that of engineering, medicine or law, each of which are typically organized as "schools" at the post-graduate level. The heads of such schools are known as *deans*, whereas departments are headed by *chairmen* . As already stated, departments are grouped together under *colleges*: in this case bearing titles such as College of Letters and Science, headed by a dean.

Universities which embraced professionalism, then, established undergraduate and graduate programs quite similar to those of conservatories. Bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees could be awarded to musicologists, performers, and composers. Musicologists would receive the PhD, while the other two might be awarded something known as DMA -- Doctor of Musical Art. Universities whose music departments prided themselves principally on their strength in musicology awarded doctorates only in research. Composers could receive master's degrees (MA).

These decisions were often determined by the powerful influence of those highly respected Europeans who came to the United States during the second World War period. An interesting case is that of Yale University, where both Paul Hindemith and Leo Schrade were appointed as professors -- with the result that Yale now has both a Department and a School of Music.

At universities that gave the doctorate only in research, graduate students in composition faced a quandary. After completing their graduate training (culminating in the MA degree), they would apply for jobs as instructors or assistant professors at other universities, only to discover that the vast majority of American colleges and universities required that in any field, *any* candidate for a position leading to tenure (i. e. permanent faculty status) must have a PhD. (There were, of course, some enlightened exceptions, such as the University of California at Berkeley, which expected the candidate to have either a PhD, "or its equivalent in training or experience.") I personally know of cases where graduate students whose interests and talents were in composition changed their field to music history in order to be considered for academic appointments.

During the '60's, this situation led to a heated debate amongst music faculty members nationwide. Musicologists, still under European influence, tended to oppose the concept of a PhD in composition, which they regarded as a non-scholarly pursuit. There is a story (which may be apocryphal) about a professor at Princeton who proposed, at a meeting of the faculty senate, that a PhD in musical composition be established. When he sat down, a professor of mathematics stood up and said that he found this proposal most interesting, since his department was just then, conversely, in the process of preparing a proposal for the establishment of a doctorate in the *history* of mathematics. The vote was then unanimous in favor of the PhD in composition.

Following the general acceptance of this principle, universities have varied somewhat in the requirements for the degree. In all cases, the dissertation is a substantial composition, typically for orchestra or large chamber ensemble, possibly including vocal groups, or perhaps a one-act opera. The requirement may also include a

paper on some analytic or theoretical topic. In addition, there are various course requirements. Occasionally it is admitted that term papers written for advanced courses will suffice, and only the composition is required as a dissertation. Yale University requires candidates for the doctorate in composition to spend time in the professional concert world outside the university, organizing performances and taking an active part in promotion.

It is obvious that such a degree is useful only to some one who intends to teach at a university, and that it has no meaning in the "real" world of concert, opera, ballet, film or television. Yet it is equally clear that subsidy in some form has been necessary for creativity at all times. Although creativity has on occasion been financially viable for some of the greatest composers, who were also good at selling their own product to an audience eager for it, it is more often the case that external support is required. In days of yore, this was of course provided by church or principality, and not directly by a ticket-buying public. In today's commercial market-place, composers of great talent can create and supply a public need for their product -- up to a point. Talent implies originality, which can take many forms, some of which the public will accept more readily than others. Schönberg and Gershwin were good friends, and used to play tennis together in Los Angeles.

One can perhaps regard the university, public or private, as the American equivalent of Count Esterhazy or the Archbishop of Salzburg. The difference is that the church or principality was the consumer of that which the composer produced: the university is not. Its purpose is to educate, and to encourage new ideas. Scholars hoping to be awarded tenure by senior faculty committees after seven years of probation must "publish or perish"; creative artists must also show external evidence of recognition. Publication itself is not crucial, since the impact of music is made on the ear of a listener, not the eye of a reader. A composer on the faculty of a university must show evidence of a substantial number of performances of his music. Some of these should have taken place at major centers such as New York, Boston, Chicago, or San Francisco (or on foreign soil), even if there have been no performances by major symphony orchestras.

Such performances, incidentally, are few and far between: most orchestra conductors and boards are fearful of alienating a public that prefers that which is stylistically familiar. This public can be persuaded, somewhat reluctantly, to accept a limited number of new works on the ground that otherwise the concert hall will become a mere museum. Some conductors have been more insistent and energetic than others in this effort, and have begun to form a culture in which new music is sought after for its own sake, as an adjunct to the standard fare. One of the most successful ways to do this is to give a little talk before performing the new piece. This talk must in itself be entertaining, and not merely a program note. It must, in a picturesque manner, describe the career of the composer, and one or two stylistic traits that can be briefly characterized. The audience must be made to giggle, if possible, in order to reduce tension and encourage receptivity. The composer himself may be asked to talk about his own work; the audience is reassured when it realizes that the music about to be heard was invented by a living, breathing human being. Occasionally, the composer may even arrange to have the orchestra play two or three brief passages of no more than ten seconds' duration. The audience will then, during the actual performance, recognize these as familiar landmarks. (This last procedure is usually avoided by major orchestras, on the ground that their audiences regard themselves as too sophisticated for it.)

Orchestral music by young faculty members - and also graduate students - is performed frequently by student orchestras. This is an invaluable aid to graduate students, who not only gain professional experience and expertise, but can now send out recordings of these works when applying for jobs. Obviously, the *schools* of music are well equipped for this task: some have more than one such orchestra, comprised of students working for advanced degrees in performance. Indiana University, for example, has several student orchestras, an opera house as completely equipped as the New York Metropolitan, and training programs in stage design, costumes, lighting, etc. Composition students from the University of Michigan, too, have portfolios of tapes of large orchestral works expertly performed.

Departments of music have, naturally, fewer resources of this kind, but in many cases are surprisingly inventive. The members of a student orchestra can be drawn from the general student population, many of whom can play instruments. Even staff members and non-music faculty may also be included. A talented and charismatic conductor can do amazing things: the University of California, Berkeley, performed Mahler symphonies, and late works of Debussy, Stravinsky, Strauss, Schönberg and Sessions, under the baton of Michael Senturia. This conductor also made a point of playing and recording brief works by graduate students in composition, thereby helping them to compete successfully in the job market. A similar situation exists at the University of Chicago, whose orchestra under the inspired direction of Barbara Schubert performs student compositions each year, and which has a special endowment for the hiring of professional chamber groups for that purpose.

Chamber music is a particularly viable medium for university composers and performers, both faculty and student. Many concerts are given which include or consist of new works, both local and international, and these are enthusiastically attended by members of the university community, and to some extent by a wider audience. (It helps, of course, if one's son or daughter is involved.) In addition, many of the larger cities are known for maintaining several chamber ensembles devoted entirely to contemporary music. These groups are supported entirely by the sale of tickets and by subsidies from various individual donors and non-profit foundations. Their organizers are typically composers at local universities (although there are some, of course, who are not).

Immediately following World War II, when I was a graduate student at Berkeley, many of us felt a need for the establishment of a series of concerts in San Francisco, to present new works to an audience not directly associated with any educational institution. We were students of Roger Sessions, and we joined forces with students of Darius Milhaud at Mills College in Oakland. Sessions and Milhaud were good personal friends, although their musical styles were quite different. As a result of this close association, Milhaud's students and Sessions' worked together in organizing the concerts of the "Composers' Forum," attended each others' seminars, and carried on lively discussions. Students from other local colleges, conservatories and universities soon joined this group and participated actively. We became good friends, and learned much from one another, as well as from our famous teachers. (Having been born and brought up on the east coast, I could not help contrasting this state of affairs with that in New York at the time, where a young composer was almost forced to belong to one "party" or another - whether dodecaphonic or Americanist-neoclassicistic.) Similar organizations have been founded in many other localities; and even though the universities and colleges are taking more and more responsibility for putting on concerts of new music, independent groups of this kind have multiplied. A particularly good example at present is the Minnesota Composers Forum, which is very active in commissioning, performing, and advertising: it distributes its literature nation-wide.

Meanwhile, back at the universities, composers and musicologists were learning to tolerate one another. This was a difficult task for the older generation, who had to achieve a consensus of some kind on how students should be educated. Credit for group performance? (Not for individual performance?) How much history, harmony, counterpoint, analysis should be *required* for all undergraduate students of music? In the post-graduate program, how much history should composers know? Should musicologists be expected to write fugues more or less in the manner of Bach?

Different universities have answered these questions in their own ways. It is not my intention to describe each variant. As a practical matter, however, it has turned out that the size of the undergraduate or graduate student body has had an effect on such decisions. A large school of music, with many undergraduates being trained in performance, may be forced to teach basic harmony and counterpoint to huge classes, with only limited individual access from student to instructor. Frequently, such a course may include not only harmony and counterpoint but solfège as well, and will be called by the prestigious misnomer "theory." Many undergraduates regard this course as a mere "requirement" which takes time away from practicing their instrument. On the other hand, a smaller private university -- even one with a strong graduate program in composition, whose students are chosen from a nation-wide list of candidates, may not be able to launch a completely effective undergraduate program in ear-training, harmony, counterpoint, and analysis -- if there is an insufficient number of undergraduates interested in music as their field of concentration. At such an institution, the professors of composition may prefer to work with graduate students and pursue their own interests, rather than giving the necessary time and effort to organizing and teaching a well-thought-out basic series of undergraduate courses. Such education may be left, in large part, to adjunct or part-time non-tenured instructors; and some individual courses, although required of the students, may be given only once every other year, for practical reasons.

In spite of such problems, the composers have, for the most part, succeeded in helping to create a healthy musical environment at the university. The dialogue between composition and musicology has borne fruit, in the sense that both parties have achieved a higher degree of sophistication by observing the point of view of their colleagues and judging its relevance to their own concerns. Some awareness of history helps the composer to judge for himself the value of objectivity as it relates to his own creative endeavors: some knowledge of technique helps the musicologist to gain insight into the creative process whose output he is studying. (I cannot help contrasting this with what has occurred in university departments devoted to the visual arts, which have often split into separate departments of art history and art practice -- in my opinion, to the detriment of both.)

In addition to these traditional disciplines, two new subjects of study have been emerging more recently, which have an impact on the university: theory and ethno-musicology.

The word theory now seems to have two meanings. The first is what I have just described as a "prestigious misnomer," and is commonly applied to such basic courses as ear-training, harmony, counterpoint, fugue, and elementary composition. These courses are intended to strengthen, step by step, the student's technical muscles, so that he can control the horizontal and vertical behavior of tones, rhythms, harmonies, etc. in ways that, although traditional, will ultimately liberate him to experiment in his own way. Courses in beginning composition may well expose the student to the possibility of employing various more recently invented techniques: but the purpose of such courses

is, again, not indoctrination but liberation. In attempting to defend this point of view, I frequently insist that one learns to swim, not the theory of swimming.

Theory, in the other sense, is the attempt to understand musical structure in a purely intellectual and frequently reductive manner. It forms the basis for analysis: in trying to understand how a particular masterpiece works, one must know what to look for, what kinds of values to assign particular details in their relation to their immediate environment, and ultimately to the whole. One must therefore develop an adequate terminology to this end. (Analysis differs from criticism in that it starts from the assumption that the piece under study is perfect.) Theory, then, is the formation of the rules by which analysis is undertaken.

The reductive type of theory is best exemplified by the work of Heinrich Schenker, which has had a profound effect on the thinking of musicians in American universities. There are many analysis textbooks based on his method, whose application is now well-nigh universal. It has greatly influenced the way in which harmony and counterpoint are now taught. It has strengthened the musician's consciousness of context in determining value, and has enhanced his awareness of the three-dimensional aspect of music, in that one can use terms such as "foreground", "middleground" and "background" to describe the significance of musical details in relation to their context. Schenker himself limited his investigations to tonal music up to and including Brahms: he regarded later music as decadent. This has not prevented later theorists from attempting to apply some of his principles to music of other styles, by various judicious maneuvers. After all, his insights have been of such obvious benefit to listeners, performers, and composers that surely, in merely passing a judgment of decadence on all contemporary music, one must simply be avoiding the need to discover how to expand the Schenker method. As a result of this and similar concerns, theory in general has become a topic of increasing interest, and the number of "theorists" has grown exponentially. Increasing concern about the hierarchical structure and definition of rhythm, meter, and accent, and their relation to pitch organization has added another dimension. Recently, many theorists (and musicologists as well) have been influenced by current trends in literary and linguistic theory and philosophy.

The term theorist has a comfortable academic ring to it, and it is no wonder, therefore, that it has rapidly taken on great significance in hiring and promotion to tenure. When a university teaching position is open to composers, a music department nowadays will typically describe it to applicants as a position in "composition/theory". The result is that many gifted young composers now feel obliged to become adept at inventing theoretical methodologies of one kind or another, and to publish them in journals devoted to the subject. Of course, the term might only mean that the applicant should be a good teacher of harmony and counterpoint; but the applicant cannot be sure of this. It is to be hoped that this situation may become clarified: there is a place in the university for both composers and theorists, some of whom may be both, but not all. Talent is at least as important as versatility.

Ethnomusicology has now come to occupy a prominent place in the curriculum. It is a healthy sign of the times that previous assumptions of western superiority in music are now challenged, or at least that music of other cultures is now studied seriously and not dismissed as merely exotic. Music from regions of Asia, Africa, India and elsewhere is being explored: a student will learn the language and then spend a considerable amount of time in the area of his interest, making recordings and transcribing, much in the way that Bartok did in the early years of the twentieth century. He will steep himself in the culture, and attempt to define the function of the music within it, thus bordering on the field of anthropology. The enthusiasm for the individuality and apparent uniqueness of

various cultural entities has encouraged the use of the word "musics," to emphasize their diversity. Those of us who hope that music is still a universal language find ourselves shuddering at this word, and vow to respond to the music itself as directly as we can, and to learn as much as we can about it.

The university is helping us to do just that. Teachers from diverse cultures are being hired to organize student ensembles to play and sing the music from their native lands, and give public performances. Courses in Indonesian gamelan and African drumming are given for academic credit, and have awakened genuine enthusiasm. Cross-cultural experiments are frequent: a group of American students, having acquired a set of gamelan instruments, have composed their own music for their ensemble, and have then given concerts in Indonesia and made recordings there.

The enthusiasm for music of non-European origin has naturally included such things as jazz, which is now a subject of serious study and performance in the university setting. Jazz has acquired the reputation of an "endangered species," following the overwhelming popularity of rock music; but even rock can be the subject of a dissertation for an advanced university degree.

Then, of course, there is electronic music of all kinds. It has pervaded American musical culture, as in the rest of the world, and can be found everywhere -- in motion pictures and television, in the ubiquitous presence of synthesizers. It is commercially successful in reducing the cost of producing backgrounds for films and in countless other ways. Experimental centers, typically modelled after the Parisian IRCAM, have been founded at most universities; and student composers are now routinely expected to acquire some expertise in composition involving this medium. All kinds of interactive techniques are being explored, and, with the advent of the computer, new technology advances so rapidly that yesterday's innovation becomes obsolete overnight. The question naturally arises: how does one acquire a degree of sophistication in the mastery of any technique, so as to be able to imagine a mature and lasting work of art? It is amazing that so much excellent and provocative music has been forthcoming: one thinks of certain seminal pieces by Milton Babbitt and Mario Davidovsky, sometimes involving a dialogue between the electronic source and the live performer.

I should not neglect to mention that much creative work of all kinds is being done outside the university: in conservatories, state colleges, community colleges, private colleges and junior colleges. What is just as important is the geographic spread of talent and expertise which has occurred, largely because of the impetus provided by local universities and colleges. It is often assumed that our cultural life is concentrated in a few large cities. New York is the center of artist management: a pianist, singer or violinist who wishes to achieve stardom must, after winning competitions, attempt to be admitted to a manager's stable. He will then be able to go on tour, since outlying cities and towns must accept his concert if they wish to schedule a performance by a world-famous soloist. The star system is based on the principle of name-recognition. A naive denizen of a small town will, according to this principle, attend a performance only by someone about whom he has read in the newspapers.

How much better it would be if each city or region were to take pride in the talent and accomplishments of its own residents, and would see to their promotion. Local chamber groups and symphony orchestras would make a special point of performing concertos with local soloists and premiering works by local composers, in or out of the universities. Word would spread, and reputations would expand. Such was the situation in Italy, Germany and Austria during the 18th and 19th centuries, as opposed to the

centralization of French culture in Paris, whereby Berlioz had to tour outside his own country, as far as Russia, before achieving local recognition.

In 1966 a group of composers, many associated with Princeton University, founded the American Society of University Composers (ASUC). According to Rita H. Mead's entry in the New Grove Dictionary of American Music (Macmillan Press Limited 1986), "The ASUC works to establish standards for teaching composition, improve communication in institutions of higher learning, represent its members' interests to the public, and provide services helpful to composers developing their careers." Since that time, this organization has expanded, and is now known as the Society of Composers, Inc. (SCI) Membership can be held by composers not connected to universities. Its headquarters is now at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. It publishes a newsletter, which features a "Call for Scores." The country is divided into eight regions, each of which schedules a local conference in a university setting, at which new music is performed. It reports the activities at each regional conference, and advertises competitions for commissions and grants, both domestic and foreign. It reports the recent activities of members, and publishes its annual budget. it occasionally features articles by composers not associated with any university, giving advice on how to pursue one's career. Each year there is a national conference.

A few years ago I had the good fortune to attend such a conference at the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa, where I happened to be serving as a guest professor. The composers represented came from all over the United States, but the majority were from the middle of the country and the south. Many of the pieces were performed by students at the University of Alabama, but a substantial number were performed by musicians from the visiting composers' institutions. There were seminars on various specialized topics, and there were many concerts: something like three a day for four days. It was an exhausting and at the same time exhilarating experience. Obviously, every composition performed was not a masterpiece, but in my opinion the quality was high, both in composition and in performance. One can only hope that through efforts of this kind a heightened sense of local pride will take root.

It is difficult to form an opinion on the overall relation between university and non-university creativity, since so many musicians have careers that involve both ways of life, professional and academic. As might be expected, composers whose styles are more complex tend to gravitate toward the universities. This has been true from the beginning. Of the two most renowned composers who came from Europe and spent their last years in this country, Stravinsky remained apart (except for giving occasional visiting lectures), whereas Schönberg taught at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Likewise, the two most influential American-born composers of the next generation, Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions, followed the same pattern. Copland's ballet scores in particular were immensely popular, and he was able to survive, independent of the income from a university teaching job. His "neo-classicism" and "Americanism" had a devoted following among many younger composers at various universities. Sessions' music was much revered, but regarded by the general public as austere and difficult. He taught at Princeton, and later at the University of California at Berkeley, and his influence on younger composers was far-reaching, especially because of the lack of dogmatism in his teaching, combined with his uncanny ability to put his finger on the students' creative problems, and to help them develop ways to express their own musical sensibilities. (I recall an occasion when he asked a student to explain to him where one phrase of his composition ended and the next one began. The student

responded: "I wanted it to be vague like Debussy." Sessions replied: "Debussy is never vague.")

Among the next generation of composers, Milton Babbitt is perhaps the one that can be singled out as the university composer par excellence. He is an accomplished mathematician, has written extensively on the implications of serialism for musical structure, and has illustrated his ideas through his compositions. He has had a profound influence on his students. On the other hand, Elliott Carter is also extraordinarily innovative in his theoretical ideas and creative in their compositional application; yet he has never been associated with a university faculty and does not teach. He, more than almost any other American composer, has an enormous European following.

Music criticism in the United States has, of course, played a role in public awareness of artistic issues, and in launching careers. Currently, there is, on the part of many music critics, a tendency toward suspicion of anything that can be called "academic;" and that word has acquired a pejorative implication. One now witnesses the emergence of a group of young composers who have learned how to provide brief orchestral works, colorfully orchestrated, and superficially "modern" in sound, which can satisfy the public's sense of guilt at being thought reactionary.

The question, then, is: does the university play a determining role in the formation of style in American music? This question is not easy to answer. Certainly, as previously noted, those kinds of music which the general public finds difficult to accept on first hearing tend to gravitate toward the university. But so do more approachable kinds of music. And the commercial world of concert, television, radio and film have certainly been influenced by "modernism" in one way or another. It should be remembered that we are now all living in an extremely eclectic era, whether in or out of the universities. Whereas Mozart's Turkish music bears little resemblance to the real thing, and Liszt's Hungarian music is heavily romanticized, today's fascination with other cultures has produced something which the psychiatrist Erik Erikson has called the"identity crisis," amongst young students attempting to define themselves.
To the extent that we take Turkish, Hungarian, Asian or African music seriously, we subject ourselves to their influence. Then who are we? Where are our roots?

It is my belief that the university provides an excellent place for the discovery of a young composer's identity, which, assuming real talent, will ultimately form itself as a result of a unique fusion of influences -- influences which are not conscious borrowings, but which have entered the bloodstream. Only that one composer will find the key to delivering his message to another listener, so that that listener will respond with the sense that "of course!" it must be like this. The university provides the necessary resources, encourages the young composer's curiosity of exploration, strengthens his muscles, and surrounds him with a safe environment for creative growth. His teacher must be careful, not to attempt to indoctrinate, but to insist on high technical standards and the awareness of responsibility toward the materials. Meanwhile, the student will notice the presence of many contemporaries from other cultures - especially Asian, at this time -- who have come to the university and who are excelling in the mastery of Western techniques. Many of them are seriously addressing the problem of their own identities, and of ways to fuse their various cultural influences.

Meanwhile, universities nation-wide continue to award PhD degrees to gifted young artists, who are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain university jobs. Universities are no longer expanding as they did in the "baby-boom" era, and for every position open to a composer there will be several hundred applications. Again, one can

only be awed by the vitality and talent that continues to exist amongst the newest generation of young composers, performers, and scholars.

Andy Imbrie on Writing Music

APPENDIX H

Andy responded to a request last Spring that he write something for the newsletter by saying it would have to wait until August. (For a further run-down on what's kept him busy see Damon's report on the next page.) The picture at left shows the distorted dark figures of the author and his wife Barbara with a distant view of a sun-splashed Rome in the background. As to his time in Italy Andy writes:

"We spent a week or so in Venice, then drove down to Florence and Rome in a rental car. I returned the car to the agency with a huge sigh of relief: it was unscathed. The traffic in Italy is even more horrendous that it was the last time I was there, thirty years ago. (You may recall that I was a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome from '47 to '49, then returned on a Guggenheim in '53-'54, and as a Composer in Residence '65-'66)."

The word music can mean almost anything nowadays, so maybe I'd better start by trying to explain the kind of stuff I write. Easier said than done. I have taught musical composition at the University of California in Berkeley ever since 1949. (They threw me out when I reached the magical age of 70 in 1991 -- it's now illegal to do that; they call it age discrimination.) From all this teaching I have noticed that the most promising students suffer from an "identity crisis." The same thing happened to me when I was studying with Roger Sessions at Princeton. Every little piece I tried to write sounded like an amateurish imitation of somebody else. At that point I was crazy about Ravel and early Stravinsky. Meanwhile, I kept on with my exercises in harmony and counterpoint.

You will remember that we had a "reading period" that lasted two weeks. In my sophomore year, Roger assigned me the task of writing one piece a day for those two weeks. It didn't matter how short it was, but it had to be complete. It was the best laxative I ever took: it cleaned out my system. After that I began to write my own music. I still needed a lot of help, and through Roger's expert guidance I was able to write a string quartet as my senior thesis, which was later performed in New York (while I was in the service, stationed in Arlington, Virginia), and which had a good review.

On looking back at all this, I now realize that we are living in an eclectic age. You flip your radio dial, and you get rock music, jazz, Mozart, music from Bali, music from the Middle Ages -- you name it. When Mozart wrote a"Turkish March" he used certain conventions that meant "Turkish" to his Viennese audience; it had little resemblance to actual Turkish music. I have had a number of enormously talented students from Korea, many of them women. They all work hard, because they don't want their parents to be ashamed of them. Many of them are interested in the folk music of their native land, and at the same time they are totally committed to Western artistic values and techniques. What is truly amazing to me is that they are able to come up with fascinating music which reflects their ancestral background and which at the same time makes perfect sense in Western terms. There is nothing cute or quaint about it. (I keep thinking of something Roger Sessions once said: "I don't care if he has a style, just so long as he has style."

So what kind of music have I ended up writing? It's a bit like asking someone: "How do you walk? How do you talk?" I can say that it is sometimes complex and dissonant; but so is a lot of other music which doesn't sound like mine. The word "dissonance" is relative. I am interested in controlling the flow of harmony so that one chord will move convincingly to another at the right moment; so that one can perceive the melodic flow and recognize references from one motive to another -- that is to say, so that one knows where we are in the piece. Is it approaching a climax? Is it referring back to something that happened previously and now takes on a different meaning? -- and so on.

Above all, I try to communicate. I tell my students that you can't say "To be or not to be, that is the question" in a rapid monotone. You have to ham it up, in order to project your idea beyond the footlights. So, in a certain sense, you have to dramatize your musical ideas in order for them to be understood. Even so, I confess that I must often hear a piece more than once in order to "get it." But this applies to Beethoven's music too. When writing my own, I try to meet my listener half way. He must give me his undivided attention: I must make my ideas clear.

42 NEWS

42 News is published occasionally by the Princeton University Class of 1942, a non-profit organization (IRS ID#22-2517344), Jack Guthrie, president,; Bob Carton, Ed Coale, Topper Cook, Rusty Husted, Dick Pate, Tita Vivian, Bob Young vice presidents. Tom Huntington, treasurer;Damon Carter, secretary. It is edited by Cook, at Pennswood Village L202,,1382 Newtown-Langhorne Rd., Newtown PA 18940-2401. Tel. 215-504-4917. Fax 215-504-4729. Email is topperc@earthlink.net.

Three Songs for Mixed Chorus -- Andrew Imbrie

These songs: 1." a wind has blown the rain away"(cummings), 2. "Love Distills Desire upon the Eyes (Euripides), and 3." The Serpent" (Roethke) were composed in 1965 and first performed by the student chorus at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa., on February 5, 1966. The texts were chosen with the idea of the musical contrasts that their juxtaposition makes possible, although they may be (and have been) performed separately. When composing these songs, I had very much in mind the sound of young non-professional voices, well trained and well rehearsed -- a sound which I have always loved.

Adam: Program notes

In searching through anthologies for a cantata text, I was struck by the power and beauty of a collection of 15th-century English lyrics on the one hand, and of a body of American poetry of the Civil War era on the other. It occurred to me that for musical purposes the two groups could be made to complement one another if juxtaposed.

The five carols of the first part begin with a recitation by the male chorus of the story of Adam, the apple, and original sin, "as clerkes finden written in theire book." The people (as represented by the male chorus) contribute the insight that "Ne hadde the apple taken been, Ne hadde never our Lady aye been Heaven's queen." The women's chorus then responds with a depiction of Mary and the Christ-child and the miracle of the virgin birth. In the third movement, the full chorus first announces (a cappella) the birth of Christ, who then enters into a conversation with his mother. Her part is taken by the soprano soloist. The chorus itself takes the part of the Christ-child, who foretells the crucifixion. There follows an extended orchestral prelude to an a cappella "chorale," in which the chorus, once again representing Christ, "speaks" directly to Mankind,
The last movement of Part One ("A God and Yet a Man?") may be regarded as a summation of the people's struggle to understand the foregoing mysteries -- a struggle in which skepticism must be conquered, one way or another, by faith.

Part Two ushers us into a New World, in which observed Nature plays a prominent role. The first movement ("Low-Anchored Cloud") is in a sense an opening prayer: "Spirit of lakes and seas and rivers, Bear only perfumes and the scent of healing herbs to just men's fields." The chorus sings, essentially, a single wide-ranging melody, overlapping and continuing from bass to soprano and back, while the orchestra attempts to suggest the moist atmosphere of Thoreau's Newfoundland cloud-bank. The second movement ("Beat! Beat! Drums!") is in rude contrast to the foregoing: Whitman's vivid call to arms overrides all daily mundane concerns and occupations. The movement is treated as the climax of the cantata as a whole; and it is followed by a setting of Melville's "Shiloh," a contemplation of the tragic aftermath of war. The text is sung by the soprano soloist, with the male chorus in the background repeatedly intoning the name of that battlefield. Second thoughts about the glory of war can be summarized in the passage: "Foemen at morn, but friends at eve, Fame or country least their care. (What like a bullet can undeceive!)"

With "The World Below the Brine" we now allude once more to Nature and to atmosphere, and to Whitman's suggestion of an analogy: just as the creatures living under water seem like a primitive form of life compared to our own, so ours may be regarded in the light of a transition "to that of beings who walk other spheres."

The final movement, "To Make a Prairie," continues the theme of a possible redemption through faith. Emily Dickinson's brief understated poem is sung by the soprano soloist, and the music recalls motives from the second movement of Part One, with its contemplation of the virgin birth.

Campion Songs -- Andrew Imbrie

The three Campion Songs were commissioned by the Naumburg Foundation. The first, "O never to be moved", was completed in January 1981, and the other two, "Fire, fire, fire" and "Come o come my lifes delight", in July of that year. Campion's elegant verse was intended for musical setting, and is ideally suited for it. The love-lyrics chosen here seem to transcend their conventions and strike a note of true persuasion. In the music I have tried to capture this spirit of courtliness combined with passion.

These songs were first performed by the New York Vocal Arts Ensemble on October 27, 1984. Originally the concert had been scheduled for an earlier date, and because of an oversight I was not informed of the change: my trip to New York for the première was in vain. I did not attend the actual performance, but had the strange experience of reading a fairly good review of it in the press. The concert at Berkeley on May 5, 1991 was my first hearing of the songs.

Dædalus

Dædalus was commissioned by the City College of the City University of New York for the occasion of a 1987 recital by Diana Dabby, pianist and electrical engineer (now at M. I. T.) The work is dedicated to the memory of Judith Resnik, electrical engineer and pianist, who lost her life in the Challenger disaster. The proceeds from the recital were donated to a scholarship fund for women engineers.

I conceived the piece as a kind of funeral oration, which proceeds from a preamble, to a contemplation of the fiery tragedy, to a diatribe against the sleazy bureaucratic mismanagement that caused it, to a lyrical celebration of the youth and talent so needlessly wasted -- talent which holds our best hope for the future.

Dream Sequence

This work was commissioned by Frank Taplin. The composition was completed on June 17, 1986.

The Title "Dream Sequence" occurred to me some time after I had finished writing the piece. It refers to any passage in a play or movie where a dream is portrayed. Such a scene typically comprises a series of events whose succession apears illogical, yet

serves to illustrate in some way a protagonist's state of mind. The title seemed to fit the piece because there is no reasonable narrative explanation for why a particular bird-call, fragment of Korean melody (*Arirang*), or other musical detail found its way in. These things were needed; they were part of the dream.

The first movement opens rather feverishly with a long phrase characterized by dynamic surges, unstable texture, and a quick dissolution. This is followed by a halting viola melody, supported intermittently by a low, fitful accompaniment. The development of this idea is interrupted, but at the same time answered, by the flute, soon joined by oboe and clarinet; whereupon all instruments participate in a more sustained drive toward the goal of the first section. This consists of an insistent disjunct passage for the piano (the bird-call) in its highest register accompanied by various commentaries, and eventually leads to a climax and subsequent collapse. The middle part of the movement strongly contrasts with all this: it is ushered in by muted strings, and characterized by a reflective English horn melody. Eventually the piano joins the strings and the bass clarinet recalls the English horn melody. Following this, elements derived from the first section reappear in new guises and positions. At the same time these disparate elements are more tightly woven together by means of an over-arching melodic line. The climax of this line coincides with the return of the high disjunct bird-music (previously for piano), now played by the piccolo. A coda brings the movement to a quiet close.

The second movement is really a scherzo, but this description ought to be qualified in the following way. A traditional scherzo moves in a fast triple time, and the listener is consistently aware of its dance-like quality. In this movement the quick triple meter is always present, but although sometimes in the foreground it is at other times merely latent, owing to the tendency of the music to broaden into a kind of evanescent lyricism, or else to re-divide the measures into fours or fives, etc., rather than into threes. The scherzo quality therefore derives as much from shifts of metrical focus as from an evocation of the dance. The "persona" behind this scherzo adopts changing disguises. The fragment of Korean melody, by the way, appears in the middle of the movement, and is characterized by the outburst of an intense vibrato at the climax, suggested by the vocal style in which the original tune is rendered.

The last movement is adagio, begun and ended by a long oboe melody.

Earplay Fantasy

This four-movement piece is dedicated to my old friend William B. Carlin, and was commissioned by the Earplay ensemble of San Francisco. It is scored for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion, and was written with the core members of that ensemble in mind.

The first movement is introductory in nature: it begins with a brief violin melody, commented upon by the other instruments. Following a short interlude, the piano picks up the melody, followed by a flute-and-clarinet duet. The cello has the last word; and the movement ends with an unaccompanied solo for that instrument.

The second movement features a complex meter (alternating measures of 5 and 6 beats), and is intended as a kind of fiery scherzo. It begins with a dialogue between the set of drums and the rest of the ensemble. The next passage is somewhat more lyrical, although the tempo and beat remain unchanged. After the climax of this section, the

return of the dialogue with the percussion comes more as a fleeting memory than as a recapitulation.

The slow movement sets the wind-and-string group against the piano in a dialogue. The percussion is silent until the very end, at which time the vibraphone enters discreetly into a final conversation with the piano.

The last movement attempts, in its rôle as finale, to pull everything together: there are faint allusions to events in previous movements, but mostly the intent is to depict a cheerful outcome.

Impromptu
for violin and piano

My *Impromptu* for violin and piano was composed between March and June of 1960, and was commissioned by the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation for its violin competition of that year.

The work is conceived as a virtuoso piece for both violin and piano. It is in three parts, to follow one another without interruption. Although certain thematic fragments from the first two reappear in the last briefly and in disguised form, the parts are essentially similar to movements of a brief sonata.

The impromptu was freely composed, without recourse to any readily classifiable system or technique. The intent was to exploit the expressive possibilities of the materials, with as much variety as is consistent with brevity

(From the record jacket of the 1973 recording by Orion: ORS 73107)

Mukashi mukashi

The title of this work for two pianos (which means "Once Upon a Time") refers to a certain nostalgia that I feel when reminiscing about the year I spent in Japan during the early 60's. Trained as a Japanese translator during my military service in World War II, I had not been able until then to visit that country. My command of the language was truly elementary; still, I was able to converse haltingly about simple things. I came away with what is no doubt a romanticized image of the landscape, people, and culture. The listener will no doubt perceive occasional references to koto music (which, incidentally, I previously explored more overtly in my 3rd String Quartet, written before my trip to Japan.)

Piano Concerto No. 3

This concerto was composed during a two-year period beginning in December 1989 and extending until November 1991. The orchestration was completed several months later. I began the work in London, and continued at my home in Berkeley, and also at Sandpoint, Idaho, and Tanglewood. Much of the orchestration was done at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

The first musical idea that occurred to me at the outset was that of a series of reiterated chords, overlapping and interrupting one another in a mysteriously urgent manner. Perhaps this was suggested by the insistent background of taxi horns in New York City, my birthplace, to which I return frequently with mixed feelings of alarm and nostalgia. (They are quite unlike the taxi horns in Gershwin's Paris.) In any event, these chords play an important rôle in the first movement, acting perhaps as a catalyst in the structure of the discourse.

It starts with an orchestral introduction, whose rhetorical melodies arise above an initial three-note chord (later to become associated with the motive just described). The piano enters, defiantly announcing the principal theme, and the orchestra eventually joins in. After an extended exploration of this material, an orchestral tutti provides a transition, which refers again to the opening chord as a preparation for a lyrical theme, again introduced by the piano. This merges into a development, whose climax leads to a return to the first theme in the piano, this time punctuated by percussion. And then: just as the violins are making their first attempt to usher in the lyrical theme, the tense reiterated chords emerge in the orchestra, bringing the action to a momentary standstill. When the violins finally succeed in their mission, the piano then enters with that lyrical theme once again, and launches into an extended solo. This in effect combines the restatement of the lyrical idea (punctuated by troubled reminiscences of the taxi horns) with the function of a cadenza. That is to say, it is up to the piano solo to work gradually from the lyricism of the second theme to the bravura of a cadenza, so that when the orchestra finally returns, the movement quickly concludes.

The second movement begins with a dialogue between strings and winds, and the piano emerges with its own melody, beginning with a very high note in the right hand accompanied by a very low note in the left. The hands converge; then, after a pause, the piano's main theme enters. After the orchestra eventually picks it up, the first part of the movement ends. The middle section moves a little faster, and is of a lighter, more playful nature. It accumulates energy gradually, and leads to a return of the high-note-low-note entry of the piano. As this prepares to usher in a return to the ideas of the first part, the tempo becomes momentarily unstable as it tries to return to the faster movement; but ultimately it settles down, and the main theme returns, this time in the orchestra. When the piano re-enters, it plays light figuration as the orchestra concludes with the original dialogue between strings and winds.

The last movement is a rondo, whose recurrent melody is first given by the piano, punched out without accompaniment in a single line, with strong accents, dynamic contrasts, and sudden interruptions. The orchestra joins in little by little. The first contrasting idea moves somewhat faster, and is characterized by repeated chords of various types in closed position, which do however coalesce into melodies. The main idea returns in the orchestra, this time fully accompanied and emphasized as an orchestral tutti. Then follows an episode in quintuple meter, light and flowing. This increases in weight and power, finally culminating in a big piano flourish in octaves, while the orchestra accompanies with repeated three-note chords derived from the original taxi-horn motive. Now follows the chief central contrast of the movement, which consists in a song-like melody in the piano, alternating with muted strings. As this gains momentum, the rest of the orchestra begins to participate, and the mutes are taken off. As the piano becomes more active and the orchestra increases its intensity, a climax is reached wherein the taxi-horns emerge again in full force, ushering in a return to the rondo theme. The rest of the movement concerns itself with the reconciliation of these various forces.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage, commissioned by the Collage Ensemble of Boston, is scored for flute (alternating with piccolo and alto flute), clarinet (alternating with bass clarinet and E-flat clarinet), violin, cello, percussion and piano. It is in two parts, the first Allegro con moto, the second beginning and ending Andante maestoso, and alternating with faster tempi.

The title occurred to me after the piece was completed (June, 1983). It expresses my view of this composition in particular (and my others in general): namely, that it was a journey in search of an answer.

This kind of search may uncover an unexpected truth, or a cryptic ambiguity; but at least the pilgrim, in reaching the shrine after his journey, has by now acquired enough faith to reject the Ivesian implication that his question is unanswered.

The first movement is characterized by energetic onward motion. Its opening phrase incorporates a characteristic progression of harmonies which will reappear at certain crucial points. The movement as a whole is punctuated by the appearance of bell-like sounds at the end of each large section. Finally, the culminating headlong forward thrust spends itself, and vanishes in a whirling figure involving piano and piccolo. The journey to the place of pilgrimage is complete.

The second movement can be thought of as what happens upon arrival. An austere and oracular piano solo is followed by an expressive flute melody accompanied by clarinet and violin. The clangorous piano music re-enters against this, and the confrontation is then followed by a hesitant melody on the marimba. Further exploration and development lead to an impassioned cello solo, based on the original flute melody. Gradually the temperature rises, until at last a new jagged variant of that melody appears in the alto flute, with intricate percussion commentary, in the manner of a profane dance. The climax of all this activity is cut off by the inexorable return of the piano music, which imperiously silences all opposition.

Reminiscence

This piece for solo guitar was written for Marc Teicholz, who had been a friend of my late son John: they used to play guitar-piano duets together.

It begins with an introductory passage, marked Andante, which soon leads into an agitated thematic statement. This in turn subsides, and then rises through slow arpeggiation to a slower lyrical melody, played entirely in harmonics in the high register. It is interrupted by forceful strumming textures, but soon returns, with accompanimental commentary. Next comes a driving Allegro passage, serving as the climax of the piece. This motion then vanishes quickly, and we hear a return of the lyrical melody, now fragmented and interrupted by louder outbursts. The opposing textures attempt a reconciliation, and soon dissolve into a return of the original tempo of Andante. Eventually the melody which originally served as an introduction is now reinterpreted as a coda.

Songs of Then and Now

The title of this group of songs can have two meanings: one that draws attention to the variety of texts used, from Shakespeare to the twentieth century, the other referring to the ages of the singers, who have just crossed the threshold, and are now young adults. "Then" refers to vivid memories of recent childhood; "now" suggests a wide-open world of discovery. "Singing" (Robert Louis Stevenson) acts as an introduction, perhaps as an excuse for starting the journey through music. "who knows if the moon's a balloon" (e. e. cummings) is a fantasy of total happiness. "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" (Shakespeare) gives us pause in its description of newly discovered human frailty. The fourth song, "anyone lived in a pretty how town" (cummings) is a kind of centerpiece: I chose it because it picturesquely portrays the lives of an ordinary, but loving, married couple named "anyone" and "no-one," and their relationship with other people. It is the longest and most substantial song of the group. "Come Unto These Yellow Sands" (Shakespeare) is essentially a dance by a group of young women, and is followed by "Full Fathom Five" (Shakespeare) with its intuition of mortality and magic. "hist whist" (cummings) is not sung, but whispered, spoken, and shouted. It attempts to portray everything scary that nevertheless makes one giggle. The final song, "The Land of Nod" (Stevenson) brings back musical ideas from the opening song, but develops them further. The journey is not over, of course, but night is falling, and it is time to dream.

Spring Fever

This work was commissioned by, and dedicated to, the Collage Ensemble. It was begun in Berkeley and and completed in Chicago on November 26, 1996. The title reflects perhaps my sense of the onset of winter in that city, and my yearning for spring, with its varying excitements and instabilities.

The first movement begins with a *maestoso* ushering-in of the clarinet first, then the oboe, then the violin which proceeds to a duet with the flute. This introduction culminates with a return to the "ushering-in" music. The main body of the movement, *allegro*, then leads off with an incisive statement by the piano, supported by short cluster-like chords. This is expanded and briefly developed until it culminates in an *espressivo* melody in octaves, which in turn leads to a faster section based on a quintuplet pattern. A climax leads to a condensed recapitulation, which this time calms down until the original *maestoso* comes back. In a sense, then, the entire movement can be regarded as an introduction to what follows.

The second movement, *allegretto*, begins as if it were going to be a scherzo, with a pizzicato theme in the cello, answered by a gentler, somewhat whimsical response by the first violin. The woodwinds then enter with their own contribution, whereupon the strings conclude the section, gradually disappearing into the lowest register until the drums take over very softly. There is a sudden, violent piano cadenza, to which the marimba responds, Both are calmed down by the rest of the group, until the oboe comes in with the original first theme, this time much slower and quite lyrical (as apposed to the original cello pizzicato). The flute responds, then the clarinet. The strings bring the movement to a close by descending gently, in four-part harmony, to the final two notes, which are extended, while a fragment of the original pizzicato returns in the cello as a ghostly reminder.

The finale begins with a forthright statement by the piano, lightly accompanied by the strings, to which the entire ensemble then responds. A second theme is announced by the clarinet, *misterioso*, but with no let-up in the rhythmically punctuated motion. This idea, too, is then taken up by the ensemble. A kind of brief development follows in 7/8 time, which soon disintegrates until a spread-out chord is reached. From this point on, a succession of individuals and groups are highlighted: after the double bass comes the string quartet, then the marimba, the woodwind trio, and finally the piano. The original statement returns, played by the entire ensemble, somewhat in the manner of the recap in a jazz arrangement. Elements from what was called the second theme are embodied in the final cadence.

Three-Piece Suite
for harp and piano

Three-piece Suite was commissioned by two San Francisco musicians, Ann Adams and Jane Galante, and was written in 1987. In writing it I was intrigued by both the similarities and the differences in the sound of harp and piano, which afforded opportunities sometimes for dramatic contrast, sometimes for intimate dialogue or a merging of color.

The first of the three pieces is brief, and serves as an introduction: it is playful and mercurial in mood. The second, more reflective, begins with an extended piano solo which is then answered by the harp. The two then converse, and following the culmination of this dialogue the harp plays in octaves, with piano accompaniment. The two instruments then alternate in harmonizing a gentle descent to a cadence. The third piece is dance-like, but with sudden interruptions and surprises.

To a Traveler

To a Traveler takes its title from Rexroth's translation of a poem by Su Tung P'O, and is dedicated to the memory of Norman Fromm, a personal friend and a patron of music in San Francisco. It was commissioned and first performed in 1972 by the San Francisco Chamber Music Society. It also appeared in a concert by the Fromm Players at Tanglewood during the summer of 1972.

From a very quiet, transparently scored introduction, two chief melodic ideas soon emerge: the first for clarinet, the second, a little faster, for violin. The general rise in energy and pace is carried further by the passage which follows, and moves to a rapid climax through the use of quickly moving figurations. The texture suddenly dissolves and the initial quiet motion is resumed. The faster tempo and agitated figuration soon re-assert themselves, and they lead to an extended development. This culminates in an impassioned melody for the violin, followed by a kind of brief cadenza for all three instruments at a still faster tempo. The effect of this is to consume most of the remaining energy, allowing for a final return to the peaceful character of the introduction, which is now combined with the reminiscent strains of the clarinet playing an expanded version of its original melody.

The violin's silence following soon after its final solo was intended to symbolize our sense of the absence of our friend. The text of the poem follows.

Last year when I accompanied you
As far as the Yang Chou Gate,
The snow was flying, like white willow cotton.
This year, Spring has come again,
And the willow cotton is like snow.
But you have not come back.
Alone before the open window,
I raise my wine cup to the shining moon.
The wind, moist with evening dew,
Blows the gauze curtains.
Maybe Chang-O the moon goddess,
Will pity the single swallow
And join us together with the cord of light
That reaches beneath the painted eaves of your home.

Trio No. 2

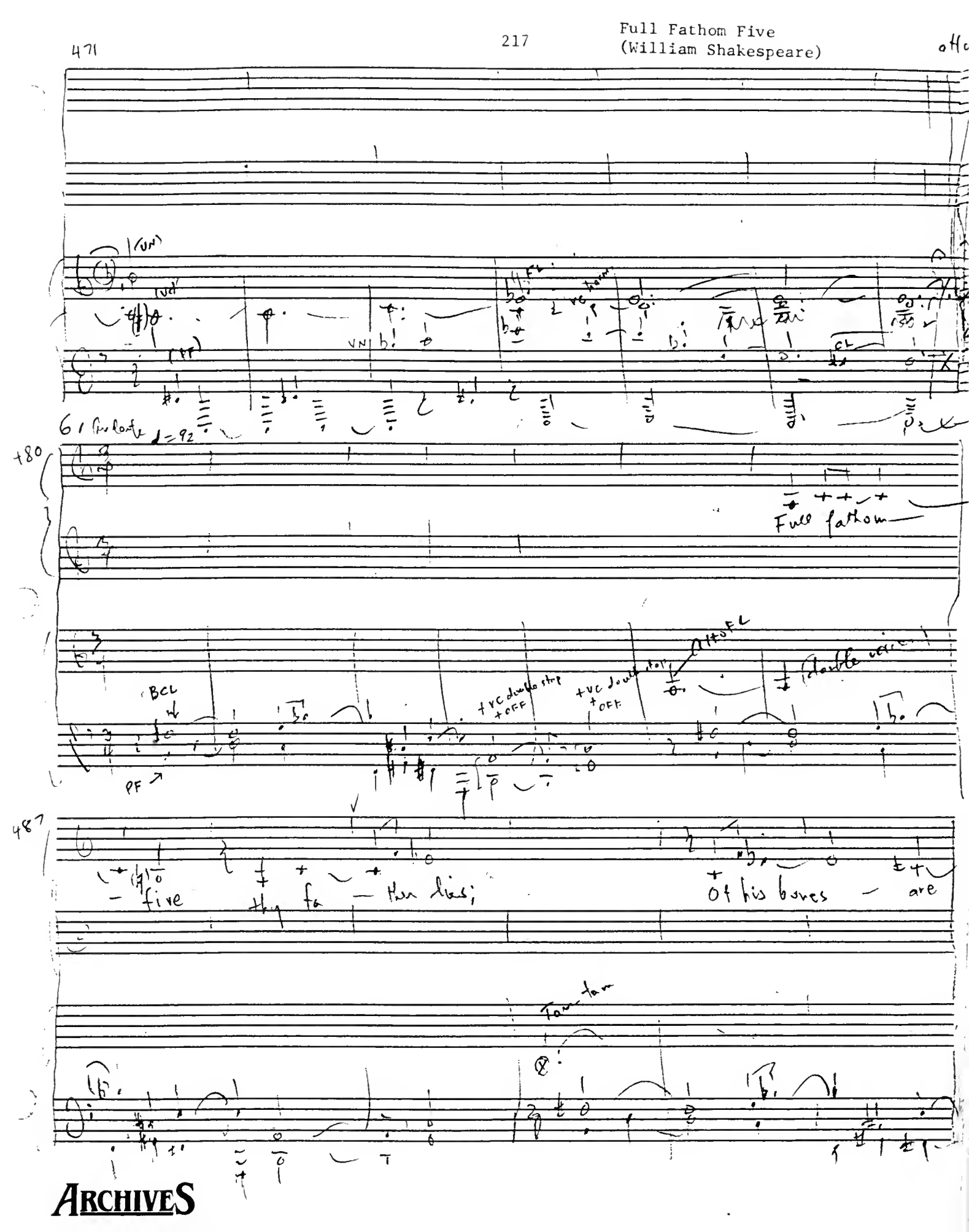
The present work is separated from its predecessor by a long period: the first Trio was written in 1946. I am now grateful to have had the opportunity to compose the second for the Francesco Trio, whose performances I have always admired, and whose friendship I cherish.

It is in three movements. The first begins with a lilting, rhythmically flexible piano introduction, to which the two strings soon add a wide-ranging melody of several phrases' duration. This eventually peaks and subsides to the low range of the 'cello, after which the original introductory material, now scored for all three instruments, serves briefly as a transition to a new section. Here the piano is the core, its melody carried by successions of closely packed harmonies, while the other instruments comment--the 'cello pizzicato, the violin pursuing a whimsical course through both high and low registers. This texture soon disintegrates, and is followed by a scurrying pattern of fast quintuplets, forming the basis for the middle section of the movement. The climax occurs when the quintuplets give way to still faster action, resulting in a lightening and fragmentation of the forward motion, and leading back to the second idea (originally for piano), now scored so that the 'cello has the melody. This is soon passed along to the violin, and at length leads to the return of the opening material, abbreviated to a kind of reminiscence rather than a full-fledged recapitulation. Just before the quiet close there is a still more evanescent reference to the scurrying quintuplets, heard as if from a distance.

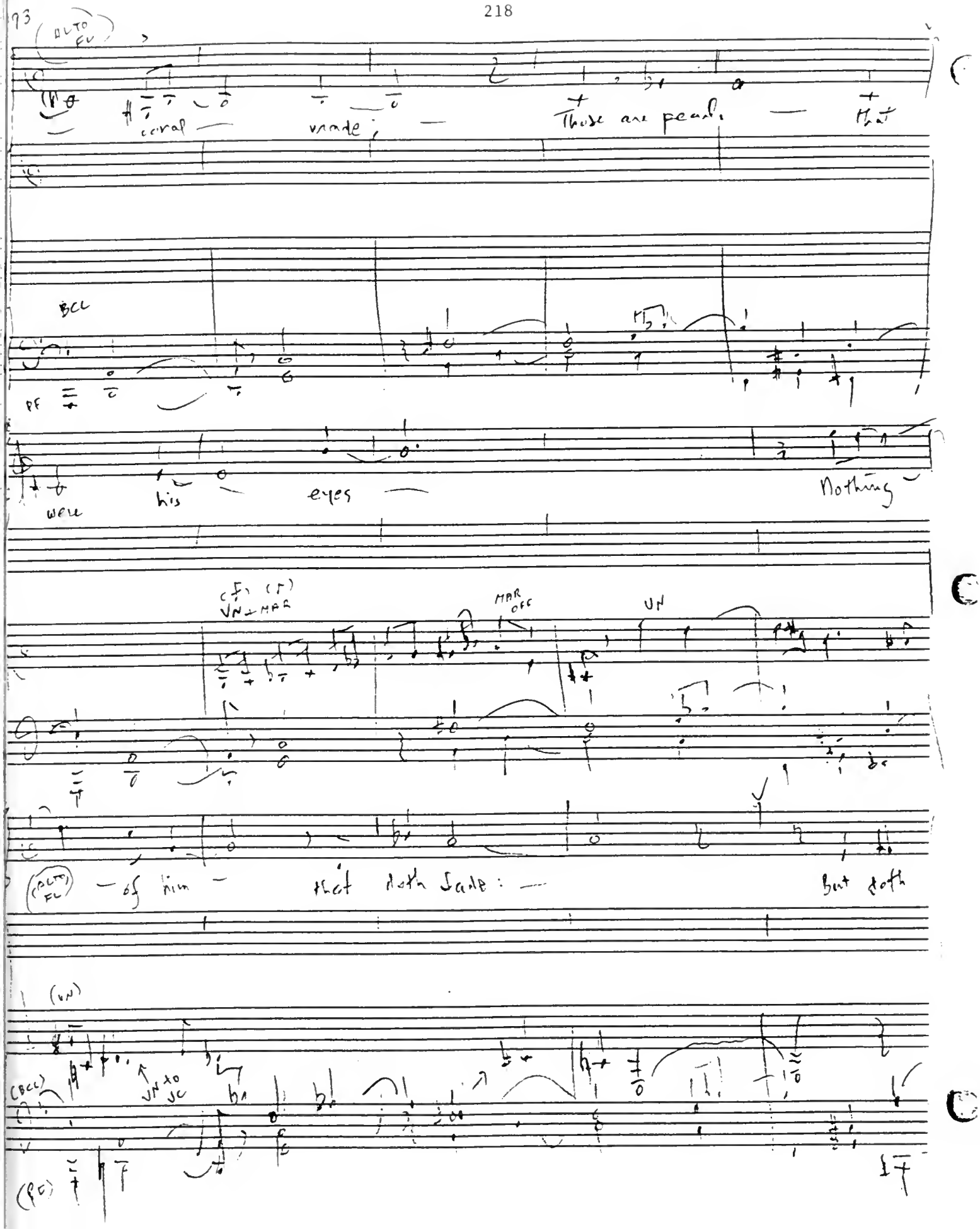
Whereas the first movement consisted of rapid exchanges and interweavings of the three instrumental strands, the second allows the protagonists to speak singly, with fewer interruptions. The violin begins, and is joined by the supporting 'cello, which at the end completes the melody, bringing it down to the lowest register, while the piano begins its solo. After this, all three join together to bring the first part of the movement to a culmination. The piano then replies with its own bell-like version of the opening violin melody. Supported at first by the strings, it then proceeds to a further, and more impassioned, development of the idea. When this has spent itself, the others come back discreetly; then the 'cello has the last word, with its concluding solo.

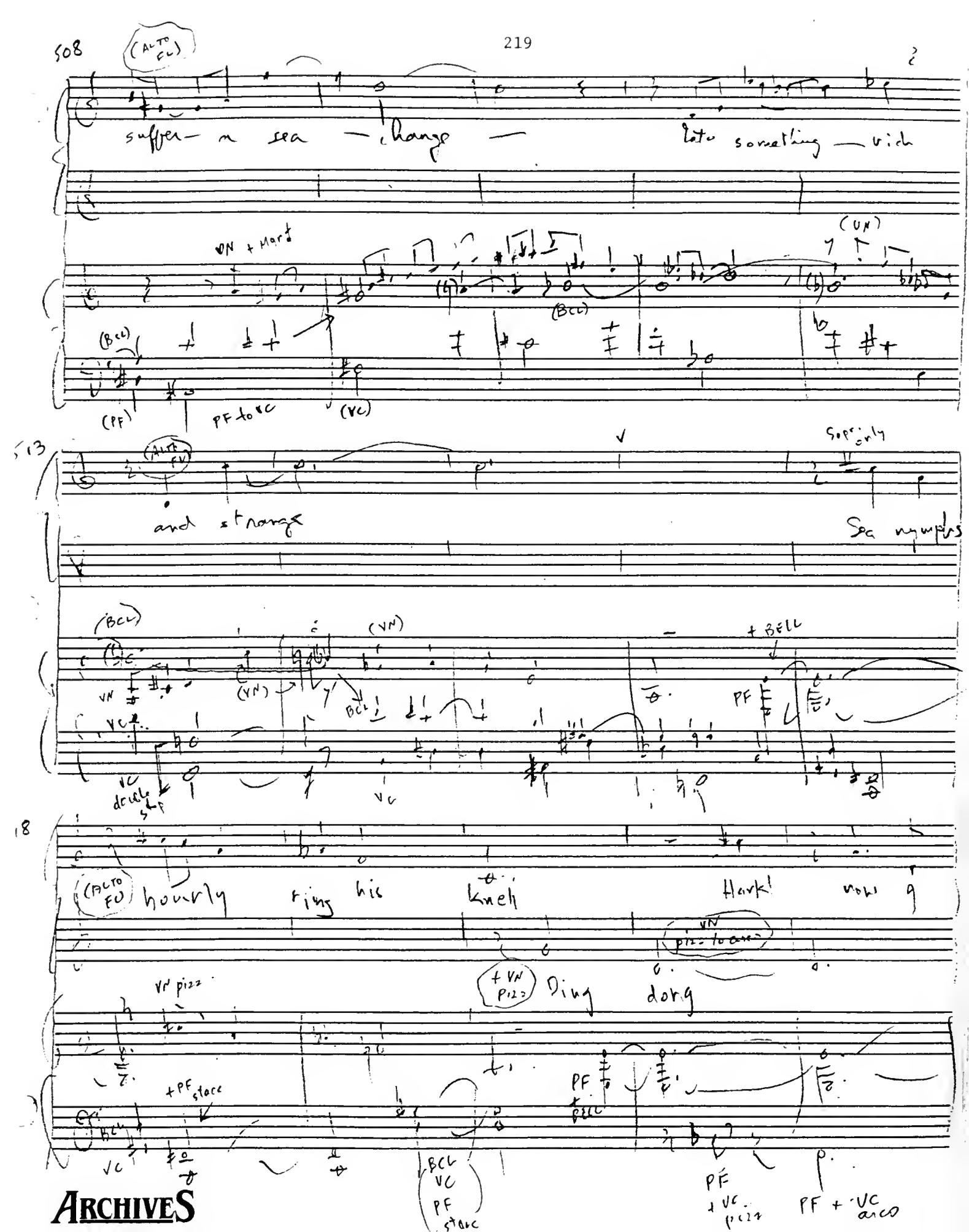
The third movement has a rondo-like quality, and is characterized by rapidly changing meters. There are harmonic references to the opening movement, appearing now in new contexts but intended as a unifying force for the work as a whole. This concluding movement is bright in coloration and exploits the virtuosity of the performers.

Full Fathom Five
(William Shakespeare)

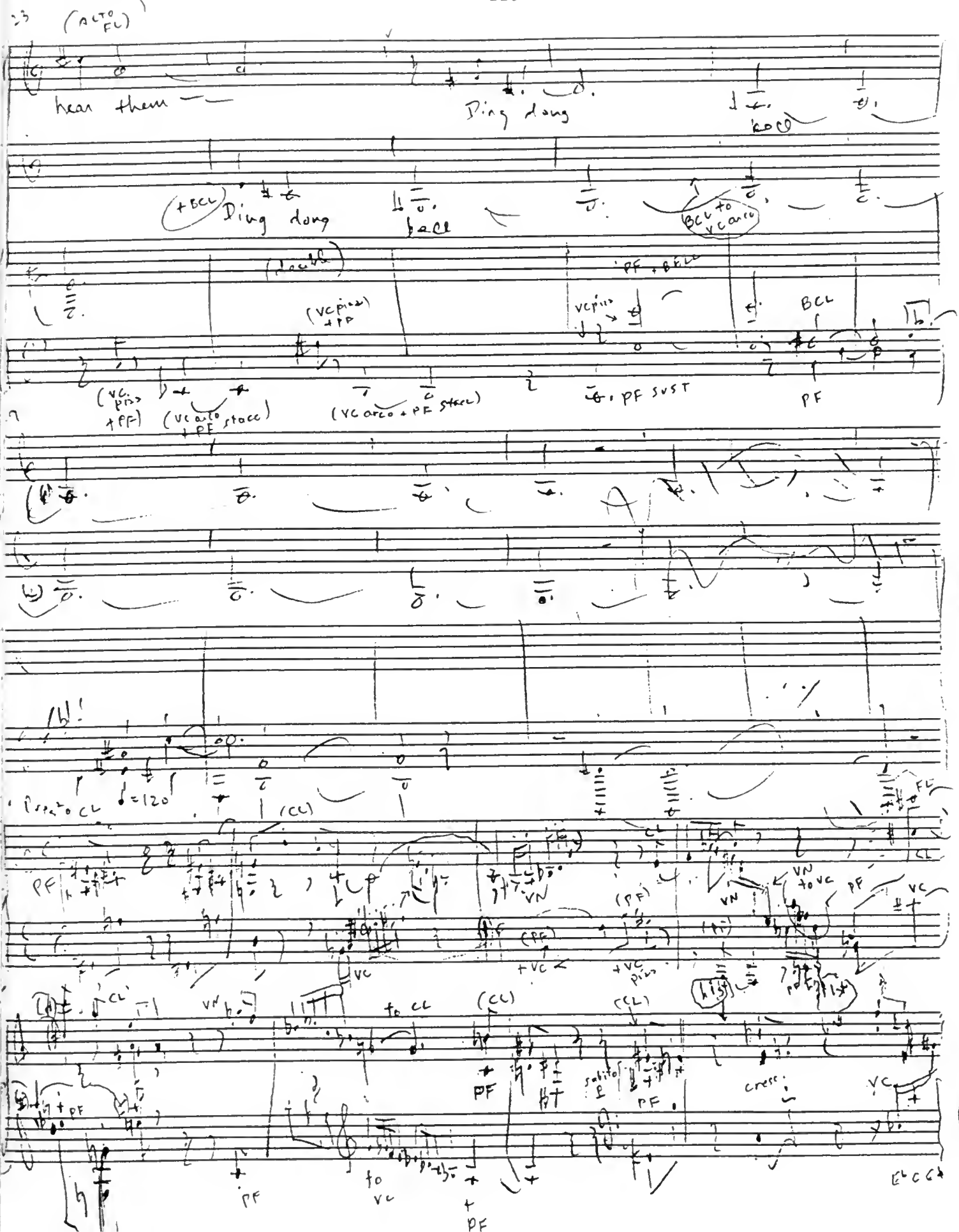


ARCHIVES

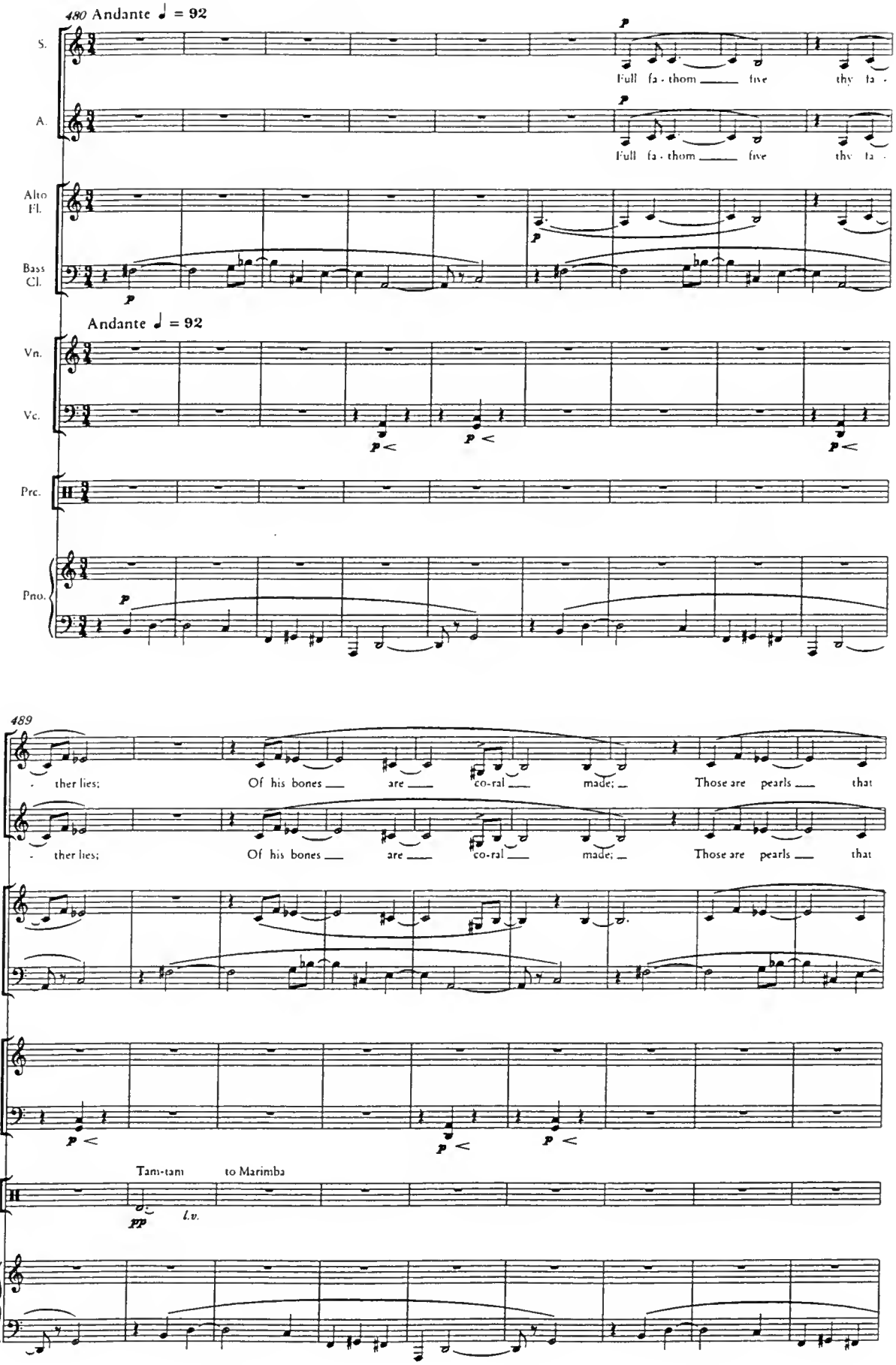

93
(ALTO FL)
Who
coral
made;
Those are pearls
that
BCL
pp
were
his
eyes
Nothing
(FL) (T)
VN + MAR
MAR OFF
VN
(ALTO FL)
of him
that doth fade:
But doth
(VN)
(BCL)
VN to VC
(BC)

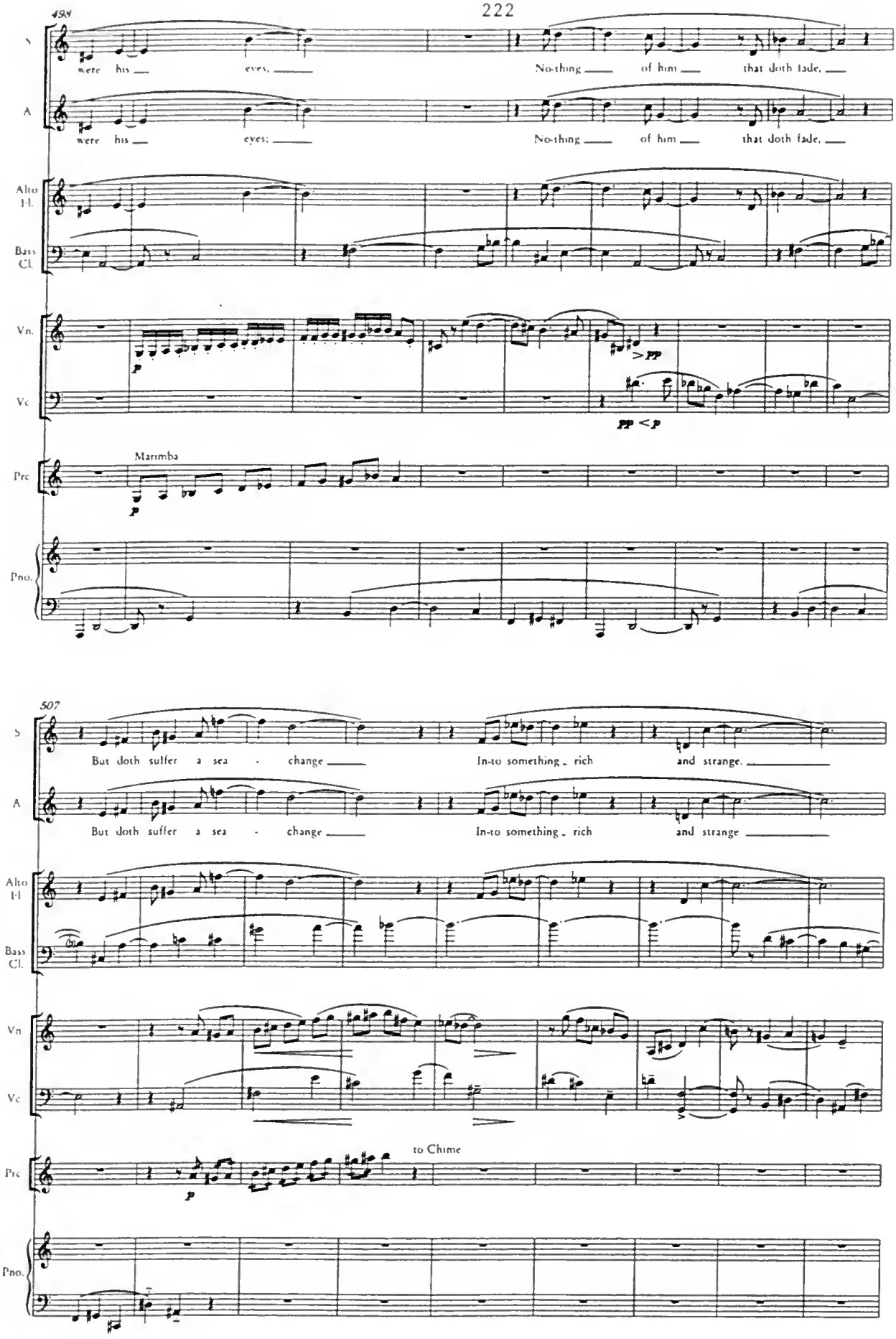

508
(ALTO FL)
suffer — a sea — change — into something — rich
VN + Mart
(VN)
(BCL)
(BCL)
(PF)
PF to VC
(VC)
513
(ALTO FL)
Soprs only
and strange
Sea nymphs
(BCL)
(VN)
+ BELL
VN
(VN)
BCL
PF
VC
VC double stop
VC
18
(ALTO FL)
hourly ring his knell
Hark! now
VN pizz to arco
+ VN pizz
Ding dong
VN pizz
+ PF stacc
PF
+ BELL
BCL
VC
BCL
VC
PF
stacc
PF
+ VC pizz
PF + VC arco

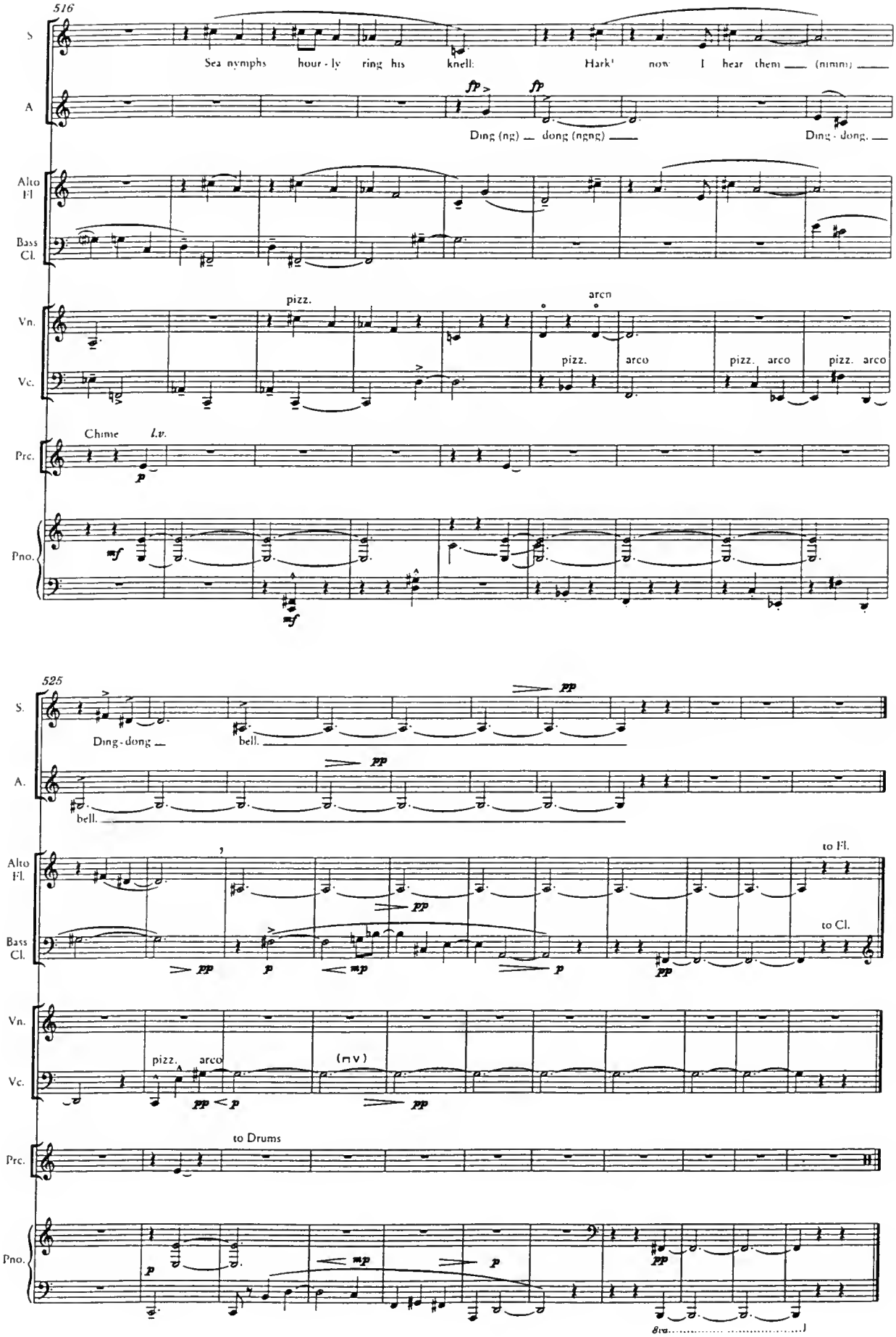
ARCHIVES


(ALTO FL)
hear them
Ding dong
bell
(+BCL) Ding dong
bell
BCL to VC arco
(VC pizz +PF)
(VC arco +PF stacc)
(VC arco + PF stacc)
PF SUST
BCL
PF
(CL)
VN
VN to VC
PF
VC
(PF)
+VC
+VC pizz
to CL
(CL)
PF
sabito
cresc.
to VC
PF

6. Full Fathom Five *(William Shakespeare)*




498
S
were his eyes, No-thing of him that doth fade,
A
were his eyes; No-thing of him that doth fade,
Alto Fl.
Bass Cl.
Vn.
Vc
p
>pp
pp < p
Prc
Marimba
p
Pno.
507
S
But doth suffer a sea - change In-to something rich and strange.
A
But doth suffer a sea - change In-to something rich and strange
Alto Fl.
Bass Cl.
Vn
Vc
Prc
to Chime
p
Pno.


516
S
Sea nymphs hour-ly ring his knell: Hark! now I hear them (nimm)
A
Ding (ng) dong (ngng) Ding-dong.
Alto Fl
Bass Cl.
Vn.
pizz.
arco
Vc.
pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco
Chime
l.v.
Prc.
Pno.
525
S.
Ding-dong bell.
A.
bell.
Alto Fl.
to Fl.
Bass Cl.
to Cl.
Vn.
Vc.
pizz. arco
(mv)
Prc.
to Drums
Pno.
8va

ANDREW IMBRIE

ANDREW IMBRIE, though New York born on April 6, 1921, spent most of his early years in Princeton, New Jersey, where his parents settled when he was a child of six. At the age of four, he began to study music. After rudimentary piano study, he became a student of Leo Ornstein in 1930 and continued to study with him until 1942 when he entered the service of the Signal Corps of the U. S. Army during World War II.

Imbrie had begun to compose as he studied piano and, after spending a summer with Nadia Boulanger at Fontainebleau, he began to work with Roger Sessions. In 1939, he entered Princeton University as an undergraduate and continued his musical studies with Sessions as part of his regular college training until his graduation in 1942. Following the war, Imbrie entered the University of California in Berkeley and continued to work with Sessions who was on the faculty at that time. In 1947 he received both his Master's degree and an appointment as an Instructor on the University's faculty. His acceptance of the post was postponed so that he might accept the Prix de Rome which he was awarded that year. Returning to the University, he was quickly promoted and became an Associate Professor.

The catalogue of Imbrie's mature works begins with chamber music. His first quartet, which was written in 1942 as his senior thesis at Princeton, won for him the New York Critics' Circle Award and recognition as one of the outstanding talents of his generation. His first quartet was frequently performed and recorded by the Juilliard String Quartet. His next quartets, the second and third, have been recorded by the California String Quartet and the Walden String Quartet, respectively.

In 1959 Andrew Imbrie was the recipient of the Walter W. Naumburg Recording Prize, awarded by the Walter W. Naumburg Music Foundation, Inc., for the recording of a major work by an American composer. His *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* is to be recorded by Columbia Records.

Performance Rights

Licensed Through

BMI

Imbrie's colleague, composer Ingolf Dahl, has written in the Musical Quarterly (Jan. 1960) comments on his quartets which might apply equally to his other works: "There is much to admire and enjoy in this music. The quartet writing is expertly achieved, with an almost overwhelming wealth of detail and with the kind of polyphony *a quattro* that leads to densely crowded textures. An equal sophistication and sureness of *metier* is operative in the control of structural design. Imbrie's seems to be primarily a lyrical orientation, in which the vigorous high points, strong as they are, become an outgrowth of the linear lyricism. The quality of these works arises out of the combination of clear, classically oriented form (in the sense of balance of contrasted sections) with the spontaneity of those welcome comments in which the music bursts out of the established patterns in free declamation."

ORCHESTRA

BALLAD IN D FOR ORCHESTRA (1947) MAL 6 min.

3-3-3-2, 4-3-3-1, timp, perc, pf-cel, str.

First performance: Rome Radio Orchestra, Fernando Previtali conductor, Rome, Italy, 1949.

". . . The last note was provided by Andrew Imbrie's *Ballad in D*, which the University of California composer wrote ten years ago but which had not been presented here previously. Its reception was significant of the somewhat mysterious way in which the public's collective ear adjusts itself to new idioms. When the *Ballad* was new, its rugged, dissonant texture might well have seemed 'difficult'; on Thursday night, however, it was tumultuously well received, thanks to its vigor, its high kinetic energy, and the sense of dramatic musical narrative which led Imbrie to give it its extremely apt title. This is one novelty of the season that ought to stay in the repertoire."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, December 15, 1956

"Although Imbrie . . . wrote his *Ballad* ten years ago as a student thesis, it fully reflects a creative personality that now is nationally recognized. The *Ballad* is dissonant and peculiarly atmospheric, but clearly rational. It continually flowers out in fascinating petals and explosive bouquets of instrumental color. It has melodic appeal and deeper meaning. The audience greeted it with lasting applause that plainly said: 'Let's hear more of Imbrie.' "

—Alexander Fried, San Francisco Examiner, December 15, 1956

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN & ORCHESTRA (1954) MAL 35 min.

3-3-3-3, 4-3-3-1, timp, perc, cel, hp, str.

Commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress.

First performance: Robert Gross, soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, Enrique Jorda conductor, April 22, 1958.

Walter M. Naumburg Recording Prize 1959; to be recorded by Columbia Records.

". . . The May T. Morrison Music Festival at the University of California . . . occasioned the first performance

of Andrew Imbrie's *Violin Concerto*. . . . It impressed me as being the most important composition of its kind since the violin concerto by Alban Berg. It is very large, very grandly scaled, and completely enthralling in the unfoldment of its complex design. Every bar and chord is ripe, mature, and perfectly considered. Everything counts — the vivid, aerated, chamber-like handling of its big sonorities, the long lines and arabesque involvements of its solo part, the growing, organic, cumulative effect of its structure. This perhaps is the most exciting aspect of the *Concerto*, if any one aspect can be separated from the others; it carries its hearer along on a significantly revelatory adventure . . ."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, April 24, 1958

". . . Imbrie's *Concerto* makes a blend of 12-tone and traditional diatonic musical idioms. One can hear in it relation to the avant-garde composers Schoenberg, Webern, Berg and Sessions. Nevertheless it takes wing with its own thoughts and personality. Its tone is too clashing and unconventional for it to attain popularity in a hurry. But it is so imaginative, so grandly audacious in its handling of emotions and instrumental effects that I think it is a work of lasting powers. It establishes Imbrie as one of the most accomplished and meaningful of all present-day American composers."

—Alexander Fried, San Francisco Examiner, April 23, 1958

". . . the most exciting sounds came from a comparative unknown: Manhattan-born Composer Andrew Imbrie, 37 . . . Slim, tweedy Composer Imbrie worked intermittently on his *Concerto* for four years, completed it in 1954. As performed last week by the San Francisco Symphony, with Robert Gross as violin soloist, it proved to be a propulsive, clamorous virtuoso work in both twelve-tone and traditional diatonic idioms, with its limber solo line woven through the big sonorities of the orchestra in a stirringly unfolding tapestry of sound. The first movement, in alternating slow and fast tempi, built to its main climax by echoing the solo violin flights with orchestral figurations set at closer and closer intervals. By turns, the second movement was complex and agitated, waltzlike and melodic, with muted violins and then muted trumpets repeating the soloist's refrainlike theme. The third movement opened with rich orchestral tone clusters, built to a brilliantly frenzied solo violin flight near the close. The 700 concertgoers called Conductor Enrique Jorda and Soloist Gross back for half a dozen bows, twice drew Imbrie from his seat in the audience."

—Time Magazine, May 5, 1958

"The Imbrie *Concerto* is clearly one of the major achievements of what can be called (on residential grounds at least) the Bay Area school of music. A work of immense technical difficulties, intricately organized structure, and astringently intense lyricism, it seemed to pick up what have been the main threads in contemporary music for the last 40 years and weave them into a brilliant and sometimes brutal, but always exciting and original musical entity. In the flashing interplay of gnomic themes between the soloist and the ensemble, it reminded one of that genius of the subtle musical rune, Anton Webern. In its seemingly inexhaustible and purely objective exploitation of musical geometry for its own sake, it reminded one of Roger Sessions. In its nostalgically melodic passages in harmonics for the solo instrument, it sounded not a little like William Walton after a lemon rinse. But aside from all such gratuitous and inescapable reminders, it said that here is Andrew Imbrie, composer, born in the twentieth century, who has been able to reflect what he feels in music through a concerto written in the great tradition of his professional forebears — a concerto that in its validity and strength may, in itself, become a part of that tradition thirty years from now."

—R. H. Hagan, The San Francisco Bay Window, April 30, 1958

LEGEND (1959) MAL 15 min.

3-3-3-3, 4-3-3-1, timp, perc, cel, hp, str.

Commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony in the American Music Center Commissioning Series.

First performance: San Francisco Symphony, Enrique Jorda conductor, December 9, 1959.

"*Legend* is a short, unprogrammatic piece which deals in spurts and sprinkles of sound. It is highly chromatic, quite fragmentary and complex in part-writing and rhythm . . . It is not difficult to listen to, although edgy enough . . . The most fascinating aspect of the score is its sound texture—very transparent in its use of pure, lustrous colors —for Imbrie has a superb ear . . ."

—Arthur Bloomfield, Musical America, January 1, 1960

LITTLE CONCERTO (1956) MAL 12 min.

For piano four-hands and orchestra:

2-2-2-2, 2-2-2-1, timp, perc, str.

Commissioned by Milton and Peggy Salkind, pianists.

CHAMBER MUSIC

DIVERTIMENTO (1948) MAL 15 min.

Fl, bsn, trp, vln, vc, pf.

First performance: Rome, Italy, 1949.

SERENADE (1952) MAL 20 min.

Fl, vla, pf.

Commissioned by Mr. & Mrs. Edward Hohfeld of San Francisco, through the Composers' Forum, 1952.

First performance: Composers' Forum, San Francisco, April 21, 1953.

". . . Mr. Imbrie's *Serenade* is the polished work of a composer who creates lively ideas and gives them shape and direction. The work is clever, but not merely clever, for the interplay of idea and technique is always fascinating and meaningful." (Music In Our Time Concert, New York City, December 27, 1959)

—Eric Salzman, New York Times. December 28, 1959

". . . It was a brisk, snappy and uncommonly entertaining musical program. Mr. Imbrie's number, chromatic-bent as to style, is a lyric piece of high color. The workmanship is spanking bright, the piece gleams with a high professional polish; it speaks, too, and most expressively."

—New York Herald Tribune, December 28, 1959

". . . The impression which this work makes on first hearing is one of unflagging creative energy matched by a rhythmic energy of equal power and a grandly scaled logic in form. Its logic, however, does not rule out all manner of ingenious surprises and curious twists, while its harmonic texture is rich and inventive. Not the least attractive aspect of the *Serenade* is its ending with a slow movement whose mood lives on after the music."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, April 23, 1953

FIRST STRING QUARTET (1942) MAL 20 min.

First performance: Princeton University, 1942.

New York Music Critics' Circle Award for chamber music, 1944.

Recorded: Juilliard Quartet, Columbia ML-4844.

". . . Another, *Quartet in B-Flat,* by Guggenheim Fellow Andrew Imbrie, is packed with up-to-date invention and energy, but it is an undergraduate work (1942), shies clear of the more ardent expression that the 32-year-old composer dares today."

—Time Magazine, February 22, 1954

SECOND STRING QUARTET (1953) MAL 20 min.

Commissioned by the Creative Concerts Guild, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., 1953.

First performance: Kroll String Quartet, May 12, 1953.

Recorded: California String Quartet, Contemporary 6003 (Stereo 7022).

"Andrew Imbrie's *String Quartet No. 2,* which the Krolls played as a New York premier, is a fine successor to his first quartet, which won a Critics' Circle Award here ten years ago. Its style is neoclassic with high chromaticism and dissonance saturations. Its tunes are strong; its rhythm is animated and elaborate; its string writing is brilliant and expert; its harmony is pungent. On all the levels of intrinsic musical interest it appeals. It has personality, too; it does not sound like other people's music. Its expressive character I do not feel competent to describe from one hearing, though I found it wholly convincing. The piece is clearly, like Imbrie's earlier string quartet, the work of a master talent. It sounds good; it feels good; it speaks with authority. There is no commoness in it."

—Virgil Thomson, New York Herald Tribune, December 9, 1953

". . . Imbrie's (second) *Quartet* is not an easy piece to play, and its performance was one of the Californians' major achievements of the season, both individually and collectively. This is music of the profoundest integrity, with a marvelously expressive, superbly shaped slow movement, and a finale that digs in with intense vitality and drive. These two movements are the best Imbrie we have so far heard; the first I found difficult to take in on a single hearing, which is my fault rather than the composer's."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, April 27, 1956

". . . Imbrie . . . writes with a deliberation and purpose that are both impressive and admirable. His *Adagio molto espressivo* movement in the *Second Quartet* is a deeply moving, albeit melancholy piece."

—Oliver Daniel, Saturday Review, March 28, 1959

THIRD STRING QUARTET (1957) MAL 20 min.

Commissioned by the University of Illinois and the Fromm Music Foundation, 1957.

First performance: Walden String Quartet, Urbana, Illinois, March 29, 1957.

Recorded: Walden String Quartet, Contemporary 6003 (Stereo 7022).

"A provocative new *String Quartet* by Andrew Imbrie began this season's concert series by the Fine Arts Quartet Monday night in Carnegie Hall . . . The new quartet, Mr. Imbrie's *Third,* . . . is a difficult work at first hearing, although it sounds tecnnically well-integrated throughout.

Its last half, starting with a scherzo-like section, had the strongest immediate appeal for this listener. The sonorities often were colorful and imaginative and always effective. And the thematic development was consistently interesting. Listed on the program as being in three movements, the work is played continuously and actually includes a large number of tempo changes. It was stimulating enough to make one wish to hear it again."

—Edward Downes, New York Times, October 15, 1958

"Andrew Imbrie: *Third String Quartet* . . . A sinewy, inventive, virtuoso work by one of the most gifted of the younger U. S. composers. Bold of theme, rawly colorful in its sonorities, it is both an abrasive and a stimulating musical tonic."

—Time Magazine, December 1, 1958

"There was justified daring in its (Fine Arts Quartet) scheduling of a new American composition as the first work of the evening, as well as of the series. This was Andrew Imbrie's *Third String Quartet,* which had not been heard previously in New York. Imbrie's music here is not of the conventional curtain-raiser variety; on the contrary, it demands and repays thoughtful listening. The work's three movements are played without interruption, and what one hears sounds like a piece of many episodes and sections strung together rather arbitrarily. The composer seems to have been unable to avoid arriving at one final-sounding cadence after another, and as a result the music is forever stopping and starting. Still, the sections hold much substance within themselves. The contrapuntal writing is sinewy; the frank, rugged dissonances are expressive, and the concurrent play of lyricism and dramatic interjection is telling."

—Allen Hughes, New York Herald Tribune, October 15, 1958

"In the *Third Quartet,* Imbrie flirts with twelve-tone procedures (particularly in the first movement) . . . the concluding *adagio,* which the composer considers 'the dramatic culmination of the work,' is profoundly beautiful. Both (works) are splendidly performed by the California Quartet and the Walden String Quartet."

—Oliver Daniel, Saturday Review, March 28, 1959

TRIO (1946) MAL 15 min.

Vln, vc, & pf.

Composed for the Princeton Bicentennial, 1946.

First performance: Princeton University, 1946.

". . . But the concert of the Composers' Forum last night at the San Francisco Museum of Art provided the rarest experience that can emerge from such an event — the discovery of an absolutely first rate, genuine and authentic creative talent. This is an exciting and enthralling experience, and the enthusiastic applause that greeted Andrew Imbrie's *Trio* at the end of the program show that it was quite generally shared. It would have been surprising, however, if this had not been the case, for the work is so rich in ideas, so colorful in its nervous, dynamic twists of rhythm and melody, so shrewdly proportioned, so clear in its texture and balance of voices, and so haunting in the strange, lyric appeal of its slow movement, that it cannot fail to move any audience, even when it may not be totally understood. Imbrie is clearly destined for an important career. Watch him. He is going to be one of the big figures in American music."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, March 6, 1947

CHORUS

INTROIT, GRADUAL, AND OFFERTORY (1956) SMC 7 min.

For All Saints' Day

SATB and organ.

Commissioned by St. Mark's Episcopal Church of Berkeley, through the Composers' Forum.

". . . and another superb choral intrepretation was provided by members of St. Mark's Choir under Norman Mealy when they sang Andrew Imbrie's *Introit, Gradual, and Offertory for All Saints' Day*. This is no unison work for school boys. On the contrary, it confronts the singers with formidably intricate counterpoint not all of which really sounds in a large church. But the ultimate result is of a strength and restrained expressiveness which belongs in the same esthetic bracket as the Sessions, even though it is attained by very different means."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, March 28, 1957

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT (1948) MAL 12 min.

SATB and string orchestra.

Text by Walt Whitman; dedicated to the University of California Chorus.

First performance: University Chorus & Orchestra, Berkeley, Calif., April, 1952.

"The third faculty work of the evening was a short, immensely effective choral composition by Andrew Imbrie entitled *On The Beach At Night*. Imbrie here plunges into one of the most perilous experiments a composer can attempt — the setting of a fragment of Walt Whitman. The mysticism and philosophic allusiveness of the words are beautifully brought over into the music, and yet the text is not drowned by it, but plays its own proper part in the proceedings. Imbrie's exceedingly subtle harmonic palette is magnificently well suited to this kind of play around and across a poem, even if at times Whitman's free rhythms throw the composer for a loss, as they have every other musician who has ever tried to handle them."

—Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, March 24, 1953

TWO CHRISTMAS CAROLS (1955) MAL 5 min.

Male chorus & pf.

Dedicated to the Lawrenceville School Glee Club.

First performance: University of California Glee Club, Robert Commanday conductor, California, 1957.

VOICE AND ORCHESTRA

THREE SONGS FOR SOPRANO MAL 12 min.

2-2-2-2, 2-2-0-0, timp, hp, sop. solo, str.

First performance: Martha Long soprano, Newell Jenkins conductor, Lucca, Italy, March 11, 1949.

PIANO

SONATA FOR PIANO (1947) MAL 12 min.

First performance: Jeanne Shapiro, Berkeley, Calif., 1948.

". . . The Imbrie *Sonata* was brilliantly paced and very pianistic. A rhythm of changing sonority was set up by the quick addition or subtraction of resonance, leaving one note exposed, or making a cloud of sound out of two or three separately struck notes."

—Theodore M. Strongin, New York Herald Tribune, March 18, 1950

". . . Mr. Imbrie's style is contrapuntal and, for the most part, continuous — not one you would expect to be dramatic. But his first movement made effective use of changing, controlled tensions and a surprising variety of patterns built into a powerful structure. The other movements, while containing some freshness and excitement, seemed less original."

—Carter Harman, New York Times, March 4, 1952

". . . The Imbrie *Sonata*, a tight and brilliant work that makes you sit forward on your chair in order to get closer to it, made a very deep impression on serious musicians; and it excited their curiosity about how the sounds were made and who made them."

—Lawrence Morton, Counterpoint, Vol. XVII, No. 1, January, 1952

"This is a terse, vigorous *Sonata* in an idiom that is both dissonant and chromatic. It bristles with minor seconds and major sevenths like the works of the extremists of two or three decades ago. But here the materials are combined in an original and more mature manner. The harmonic idiom of the *Sonata* is not the result of experimentation or any desire to shock, but rather it is the natural consequence of the emotional intensity of the composition. In spite of the dissonant style and the high degree of chromaticism the tonality is never unclear and the larger tonal relations, which are for the most part conventional, are convincing . . . Not the least of the attractions of the *Sonata* is its genuinely pianistic quality. This does not mean that the music falls conveniently under the fingers, but rather that the composer is keenly aware of the tonal character of the instrument and has devised interesting textures and sonorities. Particularly notable are the unhackneyed and invariably effective approaches to dynamic climaxes. The performer is never asked to produce a crescendo without being provided with appropriate sonorous materials . . . this is music of real merit that deserves a place in the active repertory."

—Herbert Livingston, Notes, Vol. X, No. 1, December, 1952

Abbrevations used to indicate publishers:

MAL—Malcolm Music, Ltd.
157 West 57th Street
New York 19, New York

SMC—St. Mark's Choir Association
2314 Bancroft Way
Berkeley 4, Calif.

All rights of public performance in the works described above, including broadcasting and television rights, are controlled by

BMI BROADCAST MUSIC, INC.
589 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

IMBRIE: *Piano Concerto 3; Requiem*
Lisa Saffer, s; Alan Feinberg, p; Riverside Symphony/ George Rothman
Bridge 9091 (Koch) 70 minutes

Here is an occasion for rejoicing: the first new recording of major choral and orchestral works by Andrew Imbrie in more than two decades. "At last", one is tempted to say, "at last". Why it has been so difficult to get Imbrie's works for large-scale forces recorded is a puzzle, for he is, without question, one of our greatest living composers—of comparable stature and achievement to such renown figures of his generation (he was born in 1921) as Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, and Hans Werner Henze. Yet only a handful of Imbrie's orchestral scores—the Third Symphony on CRI 632 (July/Aug 1993), *Legend* on Citadel 88117 (July/Aug 1996), and the Violin Concerto on a Columbia LP treasured by collectors—have appeared on disc until now. And every one is a masterpiece.

Imbrie's later compositions are works of magisterial craft, inexhaustible fantasy, and autumnal beauty: fully and freely chromatic but aglow with wide-spaced, gorgeous harmonies; lapidary in detail but always with a strong forward drive and sense of purpose; glittering and kaleidoscopic but airy and transparent in texture; vibrant with confident energy, playful wit, and humane warmth; yet decorous, pure, "classic" in a profound, Mozartean way. Though drawing on the legacy of Stravinsky, Bartok, Schoenberg, and his teacher Roger Sessions, as well as on the rhythmic spontaneity and suppleness of American jazz, Imbrie's voice is instantly identifiable and memorable. He has found his own way to write music that is boldly modern yet lovely, luminous, and deeply life-affirming.

All the more moving, then, when this composer faced, at age 60, the most devastating trauma a parent can imagine: the sudden death of his promising and vital 19-year-old son. Imbrie's compositional response to this staggering blow is his 1984 Requiem, written in his son's memory, a personal reworking of the rituals of this hallowed form through which the composer sought to encompass and transcend his grief by celebrating portents of the angelic and protective forces in the natural world as well as by invoking divine intercession and the hope of a life to come. Thus the sacred Latin texts are interwoven with poems by Blake ('To the Evening Star'), Herbert ('Prayer'), and Donne ('Death Be Not Proud'), and the traditional prayer for the dead, 'Dona eis requiem' (Give them rest) transmuted into a plea for the living: let them, too, find peace—and acceptance for their loss. The journey to consolation is not an easy one—there is awesome mystery, struggle, even terror in the *Dies Irae*—but the direction is always toward a transcendence of personal mourning culminating in the quiet serenity of the work's closing. This brave, grand, heartbreaking Requiem deserves and will surely gain its rightful place beside Roger Sessions's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* as one of the great modern American works of its kind.

Imbrie's Third Piano Concerto was finished in 1991, and it too is an eloquent and majestic creation—three movements lasting 38 minutes—that demands to be measured against its great predecessors in the genre. The piano writing is especially remarkable, fusing filigreed intricacy with tensile strength and heraldic grandeur. The active outer movements are beautifully counterpoised by the central Lento's delicate, magical evocation of a contemplative and poetic flow of consciousness.

George Rothman, the Riverside Symphony (a New York-based orchestra of distinguished musicians), and the New York Virtuoso Singers, are superb, as is soprano Lisa Saffer. Pianist Alan Feinberg plays with commanding authority and revealing nuance. Bridge's engineering is clarity itself: as immediate and powerful as one could ask for. This is altogether one of most rewarding and significant recordings of 1999.

MARK LEHMAN

SFCV

Published Tuesdays

San Francisco Classical Voice

December 7, 1999

Robert P. Commanday, Editor

Something New, Wonderful, Different

Reviews

OPERA REVIEW

The Eyes Had It, Not The Ears

San Francisco Opera (12/4/99)

SYMPHONY REVIEW

Sax and Clarinet Discoveries At Symphony

San Francisco Symphony (12/3/99)

CHORAL REVIEW

Messiah On The Mark

Philharmonia Baroque (12/4/99)

CHORAL REVIEW

Recapturing Monteverdi's Time

California Bach Society (12/5/99)

RECITAL REVIEW

Von Stade

The newspaper's current reference to "the season of sharing" is most apt, opposed as it is to the frenzy of giving and getting, selling and buying, pushing and promoting in which we are almost helplessly roiled. In that spirit, here we simply offer an appreciation and experience of some music produced in this region, which is our focus.

A new CD of music by Andrew Imbrie that came my way recently was especially welcome because, in the unconscionable neglect of his larger compositions by the region's orchestras in recent years, we have scant chance to hear them live (**Bridge Records, 9091). The two major works on this recording, Imbrie's *Requiem* (1984) and Piano Concerto No. 3 (1989), reflect an artistry and craft as fine as anything being produced today, and a maturity, long in place, that finds the composer speaking in his own inimitable style. His is a voice as individual and recognizable now as that of Copland, though far different from that.**

There's no speaking of "influences," not even when you know who and what has impressed him over the years. All the music that's gone into the mix is by now thoroughly assimilated. What comes out is Imbrie. I think of principal melodies, both vocal ones in the *Requiem* and instrumental lines in both that work and the Third Piano Concerto, and what strikes me again are the profiles, large and bold, expressive as they unfold. Arising from the language that is Imbrie's own, the melodies, once cast forward, move tellingly because they are harmonically right, their concluding notes sounding to the ear as the ones that had been intended -- expected, satisfying. This is no small thing. It does not mean predictable, it means "right," just as

Overreaches Her Control

Frederica Von Stade (12/5/99)

we have a feeling of where a Schubert or Brahms melody is leading, but often then in retrospect, after it's gotten there, and we think, "Ah yes." But of course, melody is just one prominent if distinctive quality in the music. I stress it first because it is an exceptional gift, and it happens in music that is individual and self-contained, independent of movements, trends, and -isms.

Requiem may be remembered by many here, for it was commissioned and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony in 1985. Imbrie composed it in memory of his son John, who died suddenly, unexpectedly, in 1981 at the age of 19. In a singularly strong architecture, movements on the traditional Requiem texts are interleaved with movements on poems by William Blake, the 17th century cleric George Herbert, and John Donne whose "Death Be Not Proud" forms the powerful penultimate statement.

At the outset, in clarity and refinement of sound, balance, nuance, it is evident that this performance first given, then recorded in New York under George Rothman's direction with his Riverside Symphony and Harold Rosenbaum's New York Virtuoso Singers is very special. Imbrie's music does not press singers and players to extremes but requires exquisite care with its rhythmic intricacy, and expressive finesse and this is fulfilled here beautifully.

The Heart Of The Tribute

The initial movement, *Requiem* and *Kyrie*, is primarily soft and pensive, the chorus uttering the prayer in a hushed chordal style. Blake's *To The Evening Star* initiated by a most tender three-note gesture, brings forward the work's single soloist, a soprano, here Lisa Saffer. The purity of her tone and line are breathtaking as she arcs the phrase on the words "thy radiant crown," the brightness of voice and the instrumental scoring gleaming. This movement is the most delicate and personal in its sensibility, the intimate heart of the tribute.

Dies Irae is forceful and fierce, naturally, but the violence is explosive and jabbing rather than sustained and thundering The orchestral music is not at all like Verdi's or any other setting. In the announcement *Tuba*

mirum, for example, the trumpets literally "scatter" the sounds. The music sung by the chorus deepens the awesome effect of those verses. In unison, the male singers engage the *Lacrymosa* in a gripping preparation for the prayer for peace that concludes the *Dies Irae*, but with an unsettled feeling. The setting of George Herbert's "Evening Prayer," for soprano and chorus, achieves a telling sense of individual appeal, which places it in passionate contrast to the more formalized *Dies Irae* and the following Offertory (*Hostias*).

With Donne's *Death Be Not Proud*, a tremendous momentum develops in impassioned music sung in unison and octaves. The conviction that rings through this, denying Death's triumph, is profoundly moving. Without break, the music bursts into the final affirmation, from the brilliance of the *Hosanna in excelsis* to the closing gentleness of the prayer for the granting of rest and eternal light. The music simply effuses that feeling. The *Requiem* is complete, a beautiful work.

Playfulness All Through It

Imbrie's Piano Concerto No. 3 in a stunning performance by Alan Feinberg, with Rothman and the Riverside Symphony, is a dazzling piece and totally fresh. The musical ideas are bright, lucid, and from them are generated fascinating musical invention. It's a show in the best sense of the concerto tradition, with a wonderful sense of playfulness all through it. The writing for the soloist is as pianistic as Imbrie, once a formidable pianist himself, can make it. Feinberg's playing sounded positively joyful and exuberant threading through the orchestral texture. It's a work that celebrates the concerto tradition without ever sounding traditional or referential to anything particular in the past.

The orchestra's music is fanciful, the ideas wedded to particular sonorities but with the colors changing constantly. The energy of the piece and the rhythm are special. Rhythm in Imbrie's music works against a pulse set up in the mind, not against a continual audible, chugga-chugga grid. The excitement comes then in being caught by the accents, being teased, jostled and swept along while your feet are not really

on the ground.

The concerto is in three movements, each beautifully balanced and with satisfying musical dialectic, the whole concerto rounding off with an unexpected return to what he calls the "taxi-horn" motive that launched the whole thing. This is a concerto for the repertoire. Precious few from this decade rate that.

Review

SFCV

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW:

Expressive Portrayals In Imbrie's "Songs" And Wilson's "City" (10/4/98)

By Richard Festinger

In a cultural climate where artistic styles are often invented for their ballyhoo value and take shape through self-conscious exaggeration, there are still some composers who have a style rich enough to convey expressively the range of human experience that music can portray. Included in that estimable group are Andrew Imbrie and Olly Wilson, whose works, along with Vincent Persichetti's "Winter Cantata," were featured on a San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' program Sunday at UC's Hertz Hall.

The Chorissima (select ensemble) of the San Francisco Girls Chorus joined forces for the Persichetti and the world premiere of Andrew Imbrie's "Songs of Then and Now," in one of the most enjoyable concerts in recent memory.

While Imbrie's songs are, on the surface, simple in texture and straightforward in musical content, their underlying conception is ambitious. The poems, some well-known, some not, by Robert Louis Stevenson, William Shakespeare and e. e. cummings, together present a kind of tableau of human experience. The eight songs open with optimism and exuberance--Stevenson's "Singing" and then cummings' "who knows if the moon's a balloon" cast as an exhilarating waltz.

A more reflective mood follows in a setting of Shakespeare's "Blow, blow thou winter wind" from "As You Like It" (wherein it is sung by Amiens as a consoling lament on man's inhumanity). Imbrie's music is here at its the most poignant, the dolorous interjections from the ensemble capturing the ironic melancholy of the poem to a T.

The centerpiece of "Songs of Then and Now" is cummings' 1940 poem "anyone lived in a pretty how town", a delightful chronicle, partially in nonsense verse, of the life, marriage and death of two ordinary people named anyone and no one. The poem

accomplishes in itself the same human tableau that Imbrie's set as a whole portrays. The sinewy and mercurial verve of Imbrie's setting is a splendid match for cummings' continually surprising language and shifting form. Two Shakespeare settings follow, "Come unto these yellow sands" and "Full fathom five" (from "The Tempest") Imbrie exchanges the flute and clarinet for their alto and bass counterparts and creates a stunningly lovely musical evocation of the mystery of death as portrayed in the poem.

The penultimate song, cummings' early "hist whist," is set as an rush of nervously whispered/spoken text laughing at its own child-like fear of goblins, ghosts and witches. It builds to a crescendo as the incantations finally burst the bounds of reason in the song's siren-like final "wheeEEE". Imbrie closes this marvelous set with Stevenson's "The Land of Nod," returning to the music of the first song and ending with a dreamy calm and a delicate final dissonance as if to evoke the elusive "curious music" of Stevenson's dream world.

The performance led by the able conductor Nicole Paiement was sure, professional and satisfying. The San Francisco Girls Chorus sang with understanding and maturity as well as vocal blend and rhythmic precision. Prepared by Sharon Paul, the group had absorbed these songs with exemplary care and thoroughness. The instrumental ensemble of flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion accompanied with near- perfect textural transparency. The straightforward structural clarity of Imbrie's settings places the focus for the performers where it ultimately must be, on successfully delivering the dramatic impact written into the the music. The performers delivered consistently.

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY, CONDUCTOR GEORGE ROTHMAN
LISA SAFFER; ALAN FEINBERG, PIANO; THE NEW YORK VIRTUOSO SINGERS, DIRECTOR, HAROLD ROSENBAUM

ANDREW IMBRIE: REQUIEM & PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3

BRIDGE 9091

THE BOSTON GLOBE
By Richard Dyer, Globe Staff
Date: July 6, 2000 Page: 8
Section: Calendar

NEW ON DISC

Andrew Imbrie (b. 1921) is one of America's master composers, a fact more widely recognized on the West Coast than elsewhere. Imbrie taught at Berkeley for decades, although he was born and trained on the East Coast, and since his retirement from full-time teaching has held important residencies at Tanglewood and in Boston, where his music has found many advocates, including soprano Lisa Saffer. Her high, pure soprano shines in the "Requiem," which he wrote in response to the unexpected death of his son John at 19 in 1981. This is a dense, personal, and powerful work in which the traditional Latin text is illuminated by settings of great English-language poems by William Blake, George Herbert, and John Donne ("Death Be Not Proud"). The Third Piano Concerto, completed in 1991, is a big 38-minute work in three movements of strikingly animated and intelligent musical discourse, distinctively urban in flavor (the composer writes that the sound of New York taxi horns was a generating factor). The piano part calls for a virtuoso, but one who is also a musician experienced in the interactions of chamber-music. Alan Feinberg fills the bill completely, and the Riverside Symphony, which commissioned the work, plays it handsomely under the direction of George Rothman.

Tapping into Andrew Imb

THE greater Bay Area is not only notable for its concentration of technological excellence, it's also proving to be a potent breeding ground for excellence in classical music.

This was emphatically brought home a couple of weeks ago when nominations for the 1999 Grammy Awards were announced.

Among the names shining forth from the list of honorees were **Andrew Imbrie**, **Kent Nagano**, **Michael Tilson Thomas**, the **San Francisco Symphony**, the **San Francisco Symphony Chorus**, **Vance George** and **Chanticleer** — all of whom are either residents from or working in the Bay Area.

A pleasant surprise

Berkeley resident Imbrie, perhaps one of the least known of this select pack, was totally surprised when told earlier this month of his placement on nominees list.

While the recording for which he was honored, "Andrew Imbrie: Requiem, Piano Concerto No. 3" was a 1999 Bridge Records release, both of the featured compositions were written years ago.

The "Requiem," a San Francisco Symphony commission, was Imbrie's response in music to the sudden death in 1981 of his beloved second son John. The second work on the acclaimed recording, the Piano Concerto, was commissioned by the **Riverside Symphony** (in New York) for **Alan Feinberg**,

with funds from The New York State Council of the Arts.

Imbrie composed it during a two-year period beginning in December 1989 in London. He continued working on it at his home studio in Berkeley, in Sandpoint, Idaho, and in Tanglewood, Mass.

During a recent interview at his Berkeley home, the tall, impressively fit Imbrie talked about his musical background and shared his thoughts on the art of composition.

After a congenial welcome and chat in their spacious living room high in the Berkeley hills, Imbrie and his wife Barbara led me into his studio.

The room, bordered on three sides by huge windows overlooking a sea of lush green foliage, is dominated by a grand piano. Volumes of published music bearing Imbrie's name are stacked amid music manuscript sheets peppered with work-in-progress on the piano, while a computer sits surrounded by books and papers.

A Joshua Reynolds-style portrait of Imbrie's great-great grandfather, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, hangs near the door, and a bookcase filled to capacity with new and antique books on all sorts of subjects and a row of chairs (for salon concerts held in the room) fill the second-story, gallery-like, area.

Japanese prints, objets d'art, a bamboo shakuhachi flute, a shamisen and a violin are among the items decorating the room.

T-cells, platelets and music

After the tour of his studio sanctum sanctorum, Imbrie responded to questions about the composition process by stressing that "a composer must absorb the influences surrounding him from both the past and the present into his very bloodstream.

"Then, all the elements in music — everything on the horizontal and vertical planes, as well as rhythm — must interact. When you're really inspired, they all fuse together into a sort of bonfire," he concluded with the passion and conviction of a young man eager to implement his inspiration.

Literary influences are also abundant in Imbrie's creative sensibility. For his Requiem, he drew upon poetry by William Blake, John Donne and George Herbert, and interpolated each in what he terms an "implied dialogue" with the traditional liturgical text.

A full orchestra, the Riverside Symphony conducted by **George Rothman**, the **New York Virtuoso Singers** under the direction of **Harold Rosenbaum**, and soprano soloist **Lisa Saffer** are the performers in the Imbrie's Grammy-nominated recording.

Imbrie was born in New York

ND TRIBUNE TUESDAY, January 18, 2000

rie's creative sensibility

on April 6, 1921. He began studying piano at 4, hungrily absorbing music of all kinds and by age 10, knew all the themes in Wagner's Ring Cycle.

"Wagner's Ring was my 'Star Wars,' " he said with a playful twinkle in his eyes.

He studied both piano and composition with **Leo Ornstein** until 1942, with an interlude during the summer of 1937 when he studied **with Nadia Boulangier** at Fontainbleau in France.

But it was upon his return from France, when he began studying with the great early 20th-century **composer Roger Sessions**, that Imbrie's musical sensibilities began to bloom.

He entered Princeton University in 1942, where at the behest of one of his professors, he launched into the musical basics of counterpoint, harmony, fugal writing.

"This professor insisted that we produce a new composition every day for two weeks," Imbrie sighed.

He stressed that, even while studying the basics of music theory at Princeton, it was Sessions, from whom he was still taking private lessons, who provided him with his greatest inspiration. The elder composer exhorted him, "Don't ever stop composing! Even if you're just working on the basics, I'll still look at all your work."

Deep impact

Sessions' impact on Imbrie was deep indeed, since, in the very next year, the young student won a New York Critics' award for his senior thesis, a string quartet, which was recorded by the **Juilliard Quartet**.

From that point to the present, a cornucopia of musical creations, more than 70 works for all sorts of instrumental and vocal combinations, poured forth from Imbrie's creative talent. Among these are piano sonatas, songs, choral works, several string quartets, an organ prelude, violin and piano concertos, a flute concerto, symphonies, operas and more.

He has been showered with commissions from all over the country — from Princeton University, the Koussevitzsky Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Naumburg Foundation, the New York Interracial Chorus, the **San Francisco Girls' Chorus**, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dartmouth College, the Pro Arte Quartet, the San Francisco Opera, the New York Philharmonic, California State University, Hayward; the Reader's Digest, in conjunction with Meet the Composer and Chamber Music America; Earplay; Collage Ensemble of Boston; the Library of Congress McKim Fund, and many more.

Learning Japanese

A significant interruption in Imbrie's music study occurred during World War II when he was selected to learn Japanese and subsequently to serve as a specialist deciphering Japanese codes. This engendered a lifelong interest in Japanese culture, and Imbrie, his wife and oldest son spent 1959 and 1960 in Tokyo on a Guggenheim Fellowship.

It was after his wartime service that he followed Sessions to UC Berkeley, where he eventually completed a master's degree. Soon after, he was named a Professor of Music at the UC Berkeley campus, a position he maintained until his retirement in 1991. He still serves of the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Imbrie married the former **Barbara Cushing**, a Berkeley school teacher, in 1953. The couple produced two sons — **Andrew Philip** in 1958, and **John Haller** in 1962. Andrew is currently married and an aeronautical engineer. He, like his mother, is active in a number of Scottish Dance groups, for whom he plays the piano, arranges and composes music. It was in memory of his second son, John, that Imbrie wrote his critically acclaimed Requiem. John, a vibrant, apparently healthy young man who was intellectually and musically gifted, died suddenly in 1981.

INDEX--Andrew Imbrie

Adams, John, 59-60
Adler, Kurt Herbert, 101-105
Angle of Repose, 99-105, 114-115
American Academy in Rome, 46-54, 72
American Academy of Arts and Letters, 152
American Society for Composers at the Universities, 121-122

Babbitt, Milton, 121
Bach, Johann Sebastian, 161
Barber, Samuel, 50
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 91, 92
Boulanger, Nadia, 8-13, 17, 150
Boyden, David, 68
Brandeis University, 117, 135
Brubeck, Dave, 21
Brubeck, Howard, 21
Bukofzer, Manfred, 55-59, 64

California String Quartet, 31-32
Carter, Elliott, 33-41, 90, 95
Casadesus, Robert, 5
Chicago, University of, 66, 118-120
Composer's Forum, 20-27, 30-33, 42, 45-46, 99
Cone, Ed, 40
Commanday, Robert, 34-36, 39, 101, 108, 110
Copland, Aaron, 17
Cowell, Henry, 26
cummings, e. e., 111, 135
Cushing, Charles, 23

Dallapiccola, Luigi, 72
DeBellis, Frank, 32, 45
Del Tredici, David, 155
de Waart, Edo, 154
Diamond, David, 150

Eaton, John, 118
Elkus, Albert, 55-57, 61, 69
Elkus, Jonathan, 24

Festinger, Richard, 79, 80
Francaix, Jean, 10
Frankenstein, Alfred, 23, 31, 36
Freedman, Gerald, 102

Galante, Jane Hohfield, 22
Gottlieb, Lou, 23, 24
Griller String Quartet, 69
Guggenheim Fellowship, 18, 34, 151

Haieff, Alexei, 46, 52
Hall, Oakley, 100, 104
Harrison, Lou, 26
Harvard University, 67, 116
Haydn, Joseph, 91, 96-97
Holloway, Jack, 25

Imbrie, Andrew Welsh: childhood, 1-11; education, 3-16, 19; family, 85-86, 137; military service, 17-19; teaching, 29, 74-79, 116-125; works, 25, 31, 99-107, 111-115, 128, 137, 146-149
Imbrie, Barbara Cushing, 85
Indiana University, 123
International School for Contemporary Music, 5, 23, 26, 33
Ives, Charles, 95

Japanese studies, 18
Jorda, Enrique, 36, 154

Kabalevsky, Dmitri, 143
Kerman, Joseph, 64, 128

Kim, Earl, 20-21, 25, 42
Koussevitsky Foundation, 44, 127
Krips, Josef, 37-39, 153-154

Lee, Helen, 79
Lehman, Mark, 148, 149
Levenson, Roger, 23
Library of Congress, 127
Ludgen, Chester, 103

Mackie, Steven, 117
Mansouri, Lofti, 102
Mauceri, John, 105
McKim Commission, 127
Messaien, Olivier, 109
Michigan, University of, 63
Milhaud, Darius, 20-21, 27, 33, 45
Mills College, 20, 28
minimalism, 59, 110
Mozart, Wolfgang, 91-94, 97, 160

National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 43
New York Music Critic's Circle, 15
New York University, 119
Nin-Culmell, Joaquin, 56-57
Norehad, Ann Abajian, 3, 5, 77
Northwestern University, 123

Ornstein, Leo, 3-5, 8, 77
Ornstein, Pauline, 3
Ozawa, Seiji, 126

Packer, Janet, 44
Perspectives of New Music, 127
Princeton University, 1, 19, 65-66, 86, 117, 120-121

Ratner, Leonard, 66
Roberts, Laurance, 48
Rosenman, Leonard, 25, 27, 42

Salgo, Sandor, 75
Samaroff, Olga, 5, 7, 8
San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 61, 80
San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, 43
San Francisco Girls Chorus, 134-136
San Francisco Symphony, 36-39, 110, 153-154
Sandpoint Music Festival, 124-125
Schenker, Heinrich, 160-161
Schoenberg, Arnold, 12, 16-17, 40, 141-142
Schuller, Gunther, 124-126
Senturia, Michael, 63
serialism, 16, 130
Sessions, Roger, 9, 14-21, 27-33, 44, 89, 157-158
Shade, Nancy, 103
Shostakovich, Dmitri, 129, 142-143
Songs of Then and Now, 133-136
Smith, William Overton, 21, 25, 27
Stanford University, 80
Stegner, Wallace, 100
Stravinsky, Igor, 10, 16-17, 90

Tanglewood Festival, 124-126
Tilson Thomas, Michael, 153
Tureck, Rosalyn, 5

unions, 22
University of California, 19-21, 45, 55-84; faculty committees, 70-74; music department, 55-70, 79-84; noon concerts, 40; orchestra, 63

Wagner, Richard, 106
Wilson, Olly, 59
Wincor, Richard, 106-107

Yale University, 3, 4

Caroline Cooley Crawford

Born and raised in La Cañada, California.

Graduated from Stanford University, B.A. in linguistics.

Postgraduate work at University of Geneva, certificate in international law and linguistics.

Degree in keyboard performance from Royal College of Musicians, London.

Copy editor for *Saturday Review Magazine*, 1973-1974.

Staff writer and press officer for San Francisco Opera, 1974-1979.

Co-Director for Peace Corps (Eastern Caribbean), 1980-1983.

Music reviewer for *Palo Alto Times*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Marin Independent Journal*, 1974-present. Published *Prague: Walks with Mozart, Dvorak, and Smetana*, 1995.

Interviewer-editor in music for the Regional Oral History Office, 1985-present. UC Extension instructor in journalism.

112495

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
C070610118